









THE COMPLETE WORKS
OF
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

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THE WORKS OF
ALFRED
LORD TENNYSON

POET LAUREATE

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TO THE QUEEN

*Revered, beloved—O you that hold
A nobler office upon earth
Than arms, or power of brain, or birth
Could give the warrior kings of old,*

*Victoria,—since your Royal grace
To one of less desert allows
This laurel greener from the brows
Of him that utter'd nothing base ;*

*And should your greatness, and the care
That yokes with empire, yield you time
To make demand of modern rhyme
If aught of ancient worth be there ;*

*Then—while a sweeter music wakes,
And thro' wild March the throstle calls,
Where all about your palace-walls
The sun-lit almond-blossom shakes—*

*Take, Madam, this poor book of song ;
For tho' the faults were thick as dust
In vacant chambers, I could trust
Your kindness. May you rule us long,*

*And leave us rulers of your blood
As noble till the latest day !
May children of our children say,
'She wrought her people lasting good ;*

*'Her court was pure ; her life serene ;
God gave her peace ; her land reposed ;
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen ;*

*'And statesmen at her council met
Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet*

*'By shaping some august decree,
Which kept her throne unshaken still,
Broad-based upon her people's will,
And compass'd by the inviolate sea.'*

March 1851.

JUVENILIA

CLARIBEL

A MELODY

I

WHERE Claribel low-lieth
The breezes pause and die,
Letting the rose-leaves fall :
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,
With an ancient melody
Of an inward agony,
Where Claribel low-lieth.

II

At eve the beetle boometh
Athwart the thicket lone :
At noon the wild bee hummeth
About the moss'd headstone :
At midnight the moon cometh,
And looketh down alone.
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,
The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,
The callow throstle lispeth,
The slumbrous wave outwelleth,
The babbling runnel crispeth,
The hollow grot replieth
Where Claribel low-lieth.

NOTHING WILL DIE

WHEN will the stream be aweary of
flowing
Under my eye?
When will the wind be aweary of blowing
Over the sky?

When will the clouds be aweary of
fleeting?

When will the heart be aweary of
beating?

And nature die?

Never, oh ! never, nothing will die ;

The stream flows,

The wind blows,

The cloud fleets,

The heart beats,

Nothing will die.

Nothing will die ;

All things will change

Thro' eternity.

'Tis the world's winter ;

Autumn and summer

Are gone long ago ;

Earth is dry to the centre,

But spring, a new comer,

A spring rich and strange,

Shall make the winds blow

Round and round,

Thro' and thro',

Here and there,

Till the air

And the ground

Shall be fill'd with life anew.

The world was never made ;

It will changé, but it will not fade.

So let the wind range ;

For even and morn

Ever will be

Thro' eternity.

Nothing was born ;

Nothing will die ;

All things will change.

ALL THINGS WILL DIE

CLEARLY the blue river chimes in its
flowing

Under my eye ;

Warmly and broadly the south winds are
blowing

Over the sky.

One after another the white clouds are
fleeing ;

Every heart this May morning in joyance
is beating

Full merrily ;

Yet all things must die.

The stream will cease to flow ;

The wind will cease to blow ;

The clouds will cease to fleet ;

The heart will cease to beat ;

For all things must die.

All things must die.

Spring will come never more.

Oh ! vanity !

Death waits at the door.

See ! our friends are all forsaking

The wine and the merrymaking.

We are call'd—we must go.

Laid low, very low,

In the dark we must lie.

The merry glees are still ;

The voice of the bird

Shall no more be heard,

Nor the wind on the hill.

Oh ! misery !

Hark ! death is calling

While I speak to ye,

The jaw is falling,

The red cheek paling,

The strong limbs failing ;

Ice with the warm blood mixing ;

The eyeballs fixing.

Nine times goes the passing bell :

Ye merry souls, farewell.

The old earth

Had a birth,

As all men know,

Long ago.

And the old earth must die.

So let the warm winds range,

And the blue wave beat the shore ;

For even and morn

Ye will never see

Thro' eternity.

All things were born.

Ye will come never more,

For all things must die.

LEONINE ELEGIACS

LOW-FLOWING breezes are roaming the
broad valley dimm'd in the gloaming :
Thoro' the black-stemm'd pines only the
far river shines.

Creeping thro' blossomy rushes and bowers
of rose-blowing bushes,

Down by the poplar tall rivulets babble
and fall.

Barketh the shepherd-dog cheerly ; the
grasshopper carolleth clearly ;

Deeply the wood-dove coos ; shrilly the
owlet halloos ;

Winds creep ; dews fall chilly : in her
first sleep earth breathes stilly :

Over the pools in the burn water-gnats
murmur and mourn.

Sadly the far kine loweth : the glimmer-
ing water outfloweth :

Twin peaks shadow'd with pine slope to
the dark hyaline.

Low-throned Hesper is stayed between
the two peaks ; but the Naiad

Throbbing in mild unrest holds him
beneath in her breast.

The ancient poetess singeth, that Hes-
perus all things bringeth,

Smoothing the wearied mind : bring me
my love, Rosalind.

Thou comest morning or even ; she
cometh not morning or even.

False-eyed Hesper, unkind, where is my
sweet Rosalind ?

SUPPOSED CONFESSIONS

OF A SECOND-RATE SENSITIVE MIND

O GOD ! my God ! have mercy now.

I faint, I fall. Men say that Thou

Didst die for me, for such as *me*,
 Patient of ill, and death, and scorn,
 And that my sin was as a thorn
 Among the thorns that girt Thy brow,
 Wounding Thy soul.—That even now,
 In this extremest misery
 Of ignorance, I should require
 A sign ! and if a bolt of fire
 Would rive the slumbrous summer noon
 While I do pray to Thee alone,
 Think my belief would stronger grow !
 Is not my human pride brought low ?
 The boastings of my spirit still ?
 The joy I had in my freewill
 All cold, and dead, and corpse-like grown ?
 And what is left to me, but Thou,
 And faith in Thee ? Men pass me by ;
 Christians with happy countenances—
 And children all seem full of Thee !
 And women smile with saint-like glances
 Like Thine own mother's when she bow'd
 Above Thee, on that happy morn
 When angels spake to men aloud,
 And Thou and peace to earth were born.
 Goodwill to me as well as all—
 I one of them : my brothers they :
 Brothers in Christ—a world of peace
 And confidence, day after day ;
 And trust and hope till things should cease,
 And then one Heaven receive us all.

How sweet to have a common faith !
 To hold a common scorn of death !
 And at a burial to hear
 The creaking cords which wound and eat
 Into my human heart, when'er
 Earth goes to earth, with grief, not fear,
 With hopeful grief, were passing sweet !

Thrice happy state again to be
 The trustful infant on the knee !
 Who lets his rosy fingers play
 About his mother's neck, and knows
 Nothing beyond his mother's eyes.
 They comfort him by night and day ;
 They light his little life away ;
 He hath no thought of coming woes ;
 He hath no care of life or death ;
 Scarce outward signs of joy arise,
 Because the Spirit of happiness

And perfect rest so inward is ;
 And loveth so his innocent heart,
 Her temple and her place of birth,
 Where she would ever wish to dwell,
 Life of the fountain there, beneath
 Its salient springs, and far apart,
 Hating to wander out on earth,
 Or breathe into the hollow air,
 Whose chillness would make visible
 Her subtil, warm, and golden breath,
 Which mixing with the infant's blood,
 Fulfils him with beatitude.
 Oh ! sure it is a special care
 Of God, to fortify from doubt,
 To arm in proof, and guard about
 With triple-mailed trust, and clear
 Delight, the infant's dawning year.

Would that my gloomed fancy were
 As thine, my mother, when with brows
 Propt on thy knees, my hands upheld
 In thine, I listen'd to thy vows,
 For me outpour'd in holiest prayer—
 For me unworthy !—and beheld
 Thy mild deep eyes upraised, that knew
 The beauty and repose of faith,
 And the clear spirit shining thro'.
 Oh ! wherefore do we grow awry
 From roots which strike so deep ? why
 dare

Paths in the desert ? Could not I
 Bow myself down, where thou hast knelt,
 To the earth—until the ice would melt
 Here, and I feel as thou hast felt ?
 What Devil had the heart to scathe
 Flowers thou hadst rear'd—to brush the
 dew

From thine own lily, when thy grave
 Was deep, my mother, in the clay ?
 Myself ? Is it thus ? Myself ? Had I
 So little love for thee ? But why
 Prevail'd not thy pure prayers ? Why
 pray

To one who heeds not, who can save
 But will not ? Great in faith, and strong
 Against the grief of circumstance
 Wert thou, and yet unheard. What if
 Thou pleadest still, and seest me drive
 Thro' utter dark a full-sail'd skiff,
 Unpiloted i' the echoing dance

Of reboant whirlwinds, stooping low
 Unto the death, not sunk ! I know
 At matins and at evensong,
 That thou, if thou wert yet alive,
 In deep and daily prayers would'st strive
 To reconcile me with thy God.
 Albeit, my hope is gray, and cold
 At heart, thou wouldest murmur still—
 'Bring this lamb back into Thy fold,
 My Lord, if so it be Thy will.'
 Would'st tell me I must brook the rod
 And chastisement of human pride ;
 That pride, the sin of devils, stood
 Betwixt me and the light of God !
 That hitherto I had defied
 And had rejected God—that grace
 Would drop from his o'er-brimming love,
 As manna on my wilderness,
 If I would pray—that God would move
 And strike the hard, hard rock, and thence,
 Sweet in their utmost bitterness,
 Would issue tears of penitence
 Which would keep green hope's life.
 Alas !

I think that pride hath now no place
 Nor sojourn in me. I am void,
 Dark, formless, utterly destroyed.

Why not believe then ? Why not yet
 Anchor thy frailty there, where man
 Hath moor'd and rested ? Ask the sea
 At midnight, when the crisp slope waves
 After a tempest, rib and fret
 The broad-imbased beach, why he
 Slumbers not like a mountain tarn ?
 Wherefore his ridges are not curls
 And ripples of an inland mere ?
 Wherefore he moaneth thus, nor can
 Draw down into his vexed pools
 All that blue heaven which hues and paves
 The other ? I am too forlorn,
 Too shaken : my own weakness fools
 My judgment, and my spirit whirls,
 Moved from beneath with doubt and fear.

'Yet,' said I, in my morn of youth,
 The unsunn'd freshness of my strength,
 When I went forth in quest of truth,
 'It is man's privilege to doubt,

If so be that from doubt at length,
 Truth may stand forth unmoved of change,
 An image with profulgent brows,
 And perfect limbs, as from the storm
 Of running fires and fluid range
 Of lawless airs, at last stood out
 This excellence and solid form
 Of constant beauty. For the Ox
 Feeds in the herb, and sleeps, or fills
 The horned valleys all about,
 And hollows of the fringed hills
 In summer heats, with placid lows
 Unfearing, till his own blood flows
 About his hoof. And in the flocks
 The lamb rejoiceth in the year,
 And raceth freely with his fere,
 And answers to his mother's calls
 From the flower'd furrow. In a time,
 Of which he wots not, run short pains
 Thro' his warm heart ; and then, from
 whence

He knows not, on his light there falls
 A shadow ; and his native slope,
 Where he was wont to leap and climb,
 Floats from his sick and filmed eyes,
 And something in the darkness draws
 His forehead earthward, and he dies.
 Shall man live thus, in joy and hope
 As a young lamb, who cannot dream,
 Living, but that he shall live on ?
 Shall we not look into the laws
 Of life and death, and things that seem,
 And things that be, and analyse
 Our double nature, and compare
 All creeds till we have found the one,
 If one there be ? Ay me ! I fear
 All may not doubt, but everywhere
 Some must clasp Idols. Yet, my God,
 Whom call I Idol ? Let Thy dove
 Shadow me over, and my sins
 Be unremember'd, and Thy love
 Enlighten me. Oh teach me yet
 Somewhat before the heavy clod
 Weighs on me, and the busy fret
 Of that sharp-headed worm begins
 In the gross blackness underneath.

O weary life ! O weary death !
 O spirit and heart made desolate !
 O damned vacillating state !

THE KRAKEN

BELOW the thunders of the upper deep ;
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The Kraken sleepeth : faintest sunlights
flee

About his shadowy sides : above him swell
Huge sponges of millennial growth and
height ;

And far away into the sickly light,
From many a wondrous grot and secret
cell

Unnumber'd and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering
green.

There hath he lain for ages and will lie
Battening upon huge seaworms in his
sleep,

Until the latter fire shall heat the deep ;
Then once by man and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the sur-
face die.

SONG

THE winds, as at their hour of birth,
Leaning upon the ridged sea,
Breathed low around the rolling earth
With mellow preludes, 'We are free.'

The streams through many a liliated row
Down-carolling to the crisped sea,
Low-tinkled with a bell-like flow
Atween the blossoms, 'We are free.'

LILIAN

I

AIRY, fairy Lilian,
Flitting, fairy Lilian,
When I ask her if she love me,
Claps her tiny hands above me,
Laughing all she can ;
She'll not tell me if she love me,
Cruel little Lilian.

II

When my passion seeks
Pleasance in love-sighs,
She, looking thro' and thro' me
Thoroughly to undo me,
Smiling, never speaks :
So innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,
From beneath her gathered wimple
Glancing with black-beaded eyes,
Till the lightning laughs dimple
The baby-roses in her cheeks ;
Then away she flies.

III

Prythee weep, May Lilian !
Gaiety without eclipse
Wearieth me, May Lilian :
Thro' my very heart it thrilleth
When from crimson-threaded lips
Silver-treble laughter trilleth :
Prythee weep, May Lilian.

IV

Praying all I can,
If prayers will not hush thee,
Airy Lilian,
Like a rose-leaf I will crush thee,
Fairy Lilian.

ISABEL

I

EYES not down-dropt nor over-bright,
but fed
With the clear-pointed flame of chastity,
Clear, without heat, undying, tended by
Pure vestal thoughts in the trans-
lucent fane
Of her still spirit ; locks not wide-dispread,
Madonna-wise on either side her
head ;
Sweet lips whereon perpetually did
reign
The summer calm of golden charity,
Were fixed shadows of thy fixed mood,
Revered Isabel, the crown and head,
The stately flower of female fortitude,
Of perfect wifehood and pure lowli-
head.

II

The intuitive decision of a bright
And thorough-edged intellect to part
Error from crime ; a prudence to
withhold ;

The laws of marriage character'd in
gold

Upon the blanch'd tablets of her heart ;
A love still burning upward, giving light
To read those laws ; an accent very low
In blandishment, but a most silver flow

Of subtle-paced counsel in distress,
Right to the heart and brain, tho' unde-
sried,

Winning its way with extreme gentle-
ness

Thro' all the outworks of suspicious pride ;
A courage to endure and to obey ;
A hate of gossip parlance, and of sway,
Crown'd Isabel, thro' all her placid life,
The queen of marriage, a most perfect
wife.

III

The mellow'd reflex of a winter moon ;
A clear stream flowing with a muddy one,
Till in its onward current it absorbs
With swifter movement and in purer
light

The vexed eddies of its wayward
brother :

A leaning and upbearing parasite,
Clothing the stem, which else had
fallen quite

With cluster'd flower-bells and am-
brosial orbs

Of rich fruit-bunches leaning on each
other—

Shadow forth thee :—the world hath
not another

(Tho' all her fairest forms are types of
thee,

And thou of God in thy great charity)
Of such a finish'd chasten'd purity.

MARIANA

'Mariana in the moated grange.'
Measure for Measure.

WITH blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all :
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange :
Unlifted was the clinking latch ;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said ;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead !'

Her tears fell with the dews at even ;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried ;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said ;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead !'

Upon the middle of the night,
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow :
The cock sung out an hour ere light :
From the dark fen the oxen's low
Came to her : without hope of change,
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed
morn
About the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'The day is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said ;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead !'

About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.

Hard by a poplar shook alway,
 All silver-green with gnarled bark :
 For leagues no other tree did mark
 The level waste, the rounding gray.

She only said, 'My life is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said ;
 She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead !'

And ever when the moon was low,
 And the shrill winds were up and away,
 In the white curtain, to and fro,
 She saw the gusty shadow sway.

But when the moon was very low,
 And wild winds bound within their cell,
 The shadow of the poplar fell
 Upon her bed, across her brow.

She only said, 'The night is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said ;
 She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead !'

All day within the dreamy house,
 The doors upon their hinges creak'd ;
 The blue fly sung in the pane ; the mouse
 Behind the mouldering wainscot
 shriek'd,

Or from the crevice peer'd about.
 Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,
 Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
 Old voices called her from without.

She only said, 'My life is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said ;
 She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead !'

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
 The slow clock ticking, and the sound
 Which to the wooing wind aloof

The poplar made, did all confound
 Her sense ; but most she loathed the hour
 When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
 Athwart the chambers, and the day
 Was sloping toward his western bower.

Then, said she, 'I am very dreary,
 He will not come,' she said ;
 She wept, 'I am aweary, aweary,
 Oh God, that I were dead !'

TO —

I

CLEAR-HEADED friend, whose joyfultorn,
 Edged with sharp laughter, cuts atwain
 The knots that tangle human creeds,
 The wounding cords that bind and strain
 The heart until it bleeds,
 Ray-fringed eyelids of the morn
 Roof not a glance so keen as thine :
 If aught of prophecy be mine,
 Thou wilt not live in vain.

II

Low-cowering shall the Sophist sit ;
 Falsehood shall bare her plaited brow :
 Fair-fronted Truth shall droop not now
 With shrilling shafts of subtle wit.
 Nor martyr-flames, nor trenchant swords
 Can do away that ancient lie ;
 A gentler death shall Falsehood die,
 Shot thro' and thro' with cunning words.

III

Weak Truth a-leaning on her crutch,
 Wan, wasted Truth in her utmost need,
 Thy kingly intellect shall feed,
 Until she be an athlete bold,
 And weary with a finger's touch
 Those writhed limbs of lightning speed ;
 Like that strange angel which of old,
 Until the breaking of the light,
 Wrestled with wandering Israel,
 Past Yabbok brook the livelong night,
 And heaven's mazed signs stood still
 In the dim tract of Penue.

MADELINE

I

THOU art not steep'd in golden languors,
 No tranced summer calm is thine,
 Ever varying Madeline.
 Thro' light and shadow thou dost range,
 Sudden glances, sweet and strange,
 Delicious spites and darling angers,
 And airy forms of flitting change.

II

Smiling, frowning, evermore,
 Thou art perfect in love-lore.
 Revelings deep and clear are thine
 Of wealthy smiles : but who may know
 Whether smile or frown be fleeter ?
 Whether smile or frown be sweeter,
 Who may know ?

Frowns perfect-sweet along the brow
 Light-glooming over eyes divine,
 Like little clouds sun-fringed, are thine,

Ever varying Madeline.

Thy smile and frown are not aloof

From one another,

Each to each is dearest brother ;

Hues of the silken sheeny woof

Momently shot into each other.

All the mystery is thine ;

Smiling, frowning, evermore,

Thou art perfect in love-lore,

Ever varying Madeline.

III

A subtle, sudden flame,

By veering passion fann'd,

About thee breaks and dances :

When I would kiss thy hand,

The flush of anger'd shame

O'erflows thy calmer glances,

And o'er black brows drops down

A sudden-curved frown :

But when I turn away,

Thou, willing me to stay,

Woorest not, nor vainly wranglest ;

But, looking fixedly the while,

All my bounding heart entanglest

In a golden-netted smile ;

Then in madness and in bliss,

If my lips should dare to kiss

Thy taper fingers amorously,

Again thou blushest angerly ;

And o'er black brows drops down

A sudden-curved frown.

SONG—THE OWL

I

WHEN cats run home and light is come,
 And dew is cold upon the ground,

And the far-off stream is dumb,
 And the whirring sail goes round,
 And the whirring sail goes round ;
 Alone and warming his five wits,
 The white owl in the belfry sits.

II

When merry milkmaids click the latch,
 And rarely smells the new-mown hay,
 And the cock hath sung beneath the
 thatch

Twice or thrice his roundelay,

Twice or thrice his roundelay ;

Alone and warming his five wits,

The white owl in the belfry sits.

SECOND SONG

TO THE SAME

I

THY tuwhits are lull'd, I wot,

Thy tuwhoos of yesternight,

Which upon the dark afloat,

So took echo with delight,

So took echo with delight ;

That her voice untuneful grown,

Wears all day a fainter tone.

II

I would mock thy chaunt anew ;

But I cannot mimick it ;

Not a whit of thy tuwhoo,

Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,

Thee to woo to thy tuwhit,

With a lengthen'd loud halloo,

Tuwhoo, tuwhit, tuwhit, tuwhoo-o-o.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE
ARABIAN NIGHTS

WHEN the breeze of a joyful dawn blew
 free

In the silken sail of infancy,

The tide of time flow'd back with me,

The forward-flowing tide of time ;

And many a sheeny summer-morn,

Adown the Tigris I was borne,

By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old ;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,

For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Anight my shallop, rustling thro'
The low and bloomed foliage, drove
The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove
The citron-shadows in the blue :
By garden porches on the brim,
The costly doors flung open wide,
Gold glittering thro' lamplight dim,
And broider'd sofas on each side :

In sooth it was a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Often, where clear-stemm'd platans guard
The outlet, did I turn away
The boat-head down a broad canal
From the main river sluiced, where all
The sloping of the moon-lit sward
Was damask-work, and deep inlay
Of braided blooms unmown, which crept
Adown to where the water slept.

A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

A motion from the river won
Ridged the smooth level, bearing on
My shallop thro' the star-strown calm,
Until another night in night
I enter'd, from the clearer light,
Imbower'd vaults of pillar'd palm,
Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb
Heavenward, were stay'd beneath the
dome

Of hollow boughs.—A goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Still onward ; and the clear canal
Is rounded to as clear a lake.
From the green rivage many a fall
Of diamond rillels musical,
Thro' little crystal arches low
Down from the central fountain's flow
Fall'n silver-chiming, seemed to shake
The sparkling flints beneath the prow.

A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Above thro' many a bowery turn
A walk with vary-colour'd shells
Wander'd engrain'd. On either side
All round about the fragrant marge
From fluted vase, and brazen urn
In order, eastern flowers large,
Some dropping low their crimson bells
Half-closed, and others studded wide
With disks and tiars, fed the time
With odour in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Far off, and where the lemon grove
In closest coverture upsprung,
The living airs of middle night
Died round the bulb as he sung ;
Not he : but something which possess'd
The darkness of the world, delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepress'd,
Apart from place, withholding time,
But flattering the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Black the garden-bowers and grots
Slumber'd : the solemn palms were ranged
Above, unwoo'd of summer wind :
A sudden splendour from behind
Flush'd all the leaves with rich gold-green,
And, flowing rapidly between
Their interspaces, counterchanged
The level lake with diamond-plots
Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
Distinct with vivid stars inlaid,
Grew darker from that under-flame :
So, leaping lightly from the boat,
With silver anchor left afloat,
In marvel whence that glory came
Upon me, as in sleep I sank
In cool soft turf upon the bank,
Entranced with that place and time,
So worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Thence thro' the garden I was drawn—
 A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
 And many a shadow-chequer'd lawn
 Full of the city's stilly sound,
 And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round
 The stately cedar, tamarisks,
 Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
 Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
 Graven with emblems of the time,
 In honour of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

With dazed vision unawares
 From the long alley's latticed shade
 Emerged, I came upon the great
 Pavilion of the Caliphat.
 Right to the carven cedarn doors,
 Flung inward over spangled floors,
 Broad-based flights of marble stairs
 Ran up with golden balustrade,
 After the fashion of the time,
 And humour of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

The fourscore windows all alight
 As with the quintessence of flame,
 A million tapers flaring bright
 From twisted silvers look'd to shame
 The hollow-vaulted dark, and stream'd
 Upon the mooned domes aloof
 In inmost Bagdat, till there seem'd
 Hundreds of crescents on the roof
 Of night new-risen, that marvellous time
 To celebrate the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Then stole I up, and trancedly
 Gazed on the Persian girl alone,
 Serene with argent-lidded eyes
 Amorous, and lashes like to rays
 Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
 Tressed with redolent ebony,
 In many a dark delicious curl,
 Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone ;
 The sweetest lady of the time,
 Well worthy of the golden prime
 Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Six columns, three on either side,
 Pure silver, underpropt a rich
 Throne of the massive ore, from which

Down-droop'd, in many a floating fold,
 Engarlanded and diaper'd
 With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.
 Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirr'd
 With merriment of kingly pride,
 Sole star of all that place and time,
 I saw him—in his golden prime,
 THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID.

ODE TO MEMORY

ADDRESSED TO —

I

THOU who stealest fire,
 From the fountains of the past,
 To glorify the present ; oh, haste,
 Visit my low desire !
 Strengthen me, enlighten me !
 I faint in this obscurity,
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

II

Come not as thou camest of late,
 Flinging the gloom of yesternight
 On the white day ; but robed in soften'd
 light
 Of orient state.
 Whilome thou camest with the morning
 mist,
 Even as a maid, whose stately brow
 The dew-impearled winds of dawn have
 kiss'd,

When, she, as thou,
 Stays on her floating locks the lovely freight
 Of overflowing blooms, and earliest shoots
 Of orient green, giving safe pledge of fruits,
 Which in wintertide shall star
 The black earth with brilliance rare.

III

Whilome thou camest with the morning
 mist,
 And with the evening cloud,
 Showering thy gleaned wealth into my
 open breast
 (Those peerless flowers which in the
 rudest wind
 Never grow sere,

When rooted in the garden of the mind,
Because they are the earliest of the year).
Nor was the night thy shroud.

In sweet dreams softer than unbroken rest
Thou leddest by the hand thine infant
Hope.

The eddying of her garments caught from
thee

The light of thy great presence ; and the
cope

Of the half-attain'd futurity,
Tho' deep not fathomless,
Was cloven with the million stars which
tremble

O'er the deep mind of dauntless infancy.
Small thought was there of life's distress ;
For sure she deem'd no mist of earth
could dull

Those spirit-thrilling eyes so keen and
beautiful :

Sure she was nigher to heaven's spheres,
Listening the lordly music flowing from
The illimitable years.

O strengthen me, enlighten me !
I faint in this obscurity,
Thou dewy dawn of memory.

IV

Come forth, I charge thee, arise,
Thou of the many tongues, the myriad
eyes !

Thou comest not with shows of flaunting
vines

Unto mine inner eye,
Divinest Memory !

Thou wert not nursed by the waterfall
Which ever sounds and shines

A pillar of white light upon the wall
Of purple cliffs, aloof descried :

Come from the woods that belt the gray
hill-side,

The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door,
And chiefly from the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves,
Drawing into his narrow earthen urn,

In every elbow and turn,
The filter'd tribute of the rough woodland,
O ! hither lead thy feet !

Pour round mine ears the livelong bleat
Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled
folds,

Upon the ridged wolds,
When the first matin-song hath waken'd
loud

Over the dark dewy earth forlorn,
What time the amber morn
Forth gushes from beneath a low-hung
cloud.

V

Large dowries doth the raptured eye
To the young spirit present

When first she is wed ;
And like a bride of old
In triumph led,
With music and sweet showers
Of festal flowers,

Unto the dwelling she must sway.
Well hast thou done, great artist Memory,
In setting round thy first experiment
With royal frame-work of wrought
gold ;

Needs must thou dearly love thy first
essay,

And foremost in thy various gallery
Place it, where sweetest sunlight falls
Upon the storied walls ;

For the discovery
And newness of thine art so pleased thee,
That all which thou hast drawn of fairest
Or boldest since, but lightly weighs
With thee unto the love thou bearest
The first-born of thy genius. Artist-like,
Ever retiring thou dost gaze

On the prime labour of thine early days :
No matter what the sketch might be ;
Whether the high field on the bushless
Pike,

Or even a sand-built ridge
Of heaped hills that mound the sea,
Overblown with murmurs harsh,
Or even a lowly cottage whence we see
Stretch'd wide and wild the waste enor-
mous marsh,

Where from the frequent bridge,
Like emblems of infinity,
The trenched waters run from sky to sky ;
Or a garden bower'd close

With plaited alleys of the trailing rose,
 Long alleys falling down to twilight grotts,
 Or opening upon level plots
 Of crowned lilies, standing near
 Purple-spiked lavender :
 Whither in after life retired
 From brawling storms,
 From weary wind,
 With youthful fancy re-inspired,

We may hold converse with all forms
 Of the many-sided mind,
 And those whom passion hath not blinded,
 Subtle-thoughted, myriad-minded.

My friend, with you to live alone,
 Were how much better than to own
 A crown, a sceptre, and a throne !

O strengthen me, enlighten me !
 I faint in this obscurity,
 Thou dewy dawn of memory.

SONG

I

A SPIRIT haunts the year's last hours
 Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers :
 To himself he talks ;
 For at eventide, listening earnestly,
 At his work you may hear him sob and
 sigh
 In the walks ;
 Earthward he boweth the heavy
 stalks

Of the mouldering flowers :
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

II

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
 As a sick man's room when he taketh
 repose
 An hour before death ;
 My very heart faints and my whole soul
 grieves
 At the moist rich smell of the rotting
 leaves,

And the breath
 Of the fading edges of box beneath,
 And the year's last rose.
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly ;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

A CHARACTER

WITH a half-glance upon the sky
 At night he said, ' The wanderings
 Of this most intricate Universe
 Teach me the nothingness of things.'
 Yet could not all creation pierce
 Beyond the bottom of his eye.

He spake of beauty : that the dull
 Saw no divinity in grass,
 Life in dead stones, or spirit in air ;
 Then looking as 'twere in a glass,
 He smooth'd his chin and sleek'd his hair,
 And said the earth was beautiful.

He spake of virtue : not the gods
 More purely, when they wish to charm
 Pallas and Juno sitting by :
 And with a sweeping of the arm,
 And a lack-lustre dead-blue eye,
 Devolved his rounded periods.

Most delicately hour by hour
 He canvass'd human mysteries,
 And trod on silk, as if the winds
 Blew his own praises in his eyes,
 And stood aloof from other minds
 In impotence of fancied power.

With lips depress'd as he were meek,
 Himself unto himself he sold :
 Upon himself himself did feed :
 Quiet, dispassionate, and cold,
 And other than his form of creed,
 With chisell'd features clear and sleek.

THE POET

THE poet in a golden clime was born,
 With golden stars above ;
 Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn
 of scorn,
 The love of love.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good
and ill,
He saw thro' his own soul.
The marvel of the everlasting will,
An open scroll,

Before him lay : with echoing feet he
threaded
The secretest walks of fame :
The viewless arrows of his thoughts were
headed
And wing'd with flame,

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver
tongue,
And of so fierce a flight,
From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,
Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which
bore
Them earthward till they lit ;
Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field
flower,
The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth
anew
Where'er they fell, behold,
Like to the mother plant in semblance,
grew
A flower all gold,

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling
The winged shafts of truth,
To throng with stately blooms the breath-
ing spring
Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with
beams,
Tho' one did fling the fire.
Heaven flow'd upon the soul in many
dreams
Of high desire.

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the
world
Like one great garden show'd,
And thro' the wreaths of floating dark
upcurl'd,
Rare sunrise flow'd.

And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise
Her beautiful bold brow,
When rites and forms before his burning
eyes
Melted like snow.

There was no blood upon her maiden robes
Sunn'd by those orient skies ;
But round about the circles of the globes
Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was traced in
flame
WISDOM, a name to shake
All evil dreams of power—a sacred name.
And when she spake,

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,
And as the lightning to the thunder
Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,
Making earth wonder,

So was their meaning to her words. No
sword
Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,
But one poor poet's scroll, and with *his*
word
She shook the world.

THE POET'S MIND

I

VEX not thou the poet's mind
With thy shallow wit :
Vex not thou the poet's mind ;
For thou canst not fathom it.
Clear and bright it should be ever,
Flowing like a crystal river ;
Bright as light, and clear as wind.

II

Dark-brow'd sophist, come not anear ;
All the place is holy ground ;
Hollow smile and frozen sneer
Come not here.
Holy water will I pour
Into every spicy flower
Of the laurel-shrubs that hedge it around.
The flowers would faint at your cruel
cheer.

In your eye there is death,
There is frost in your breath
Which would blight the plants.

Where you stand you cannot hear
From the groves within
The wild-bird's din.

In the heart of the garden the merry bird
chants.

It would fall to the ground if you came
in.

In the middle leaps a fountain
Like sheet lightning,
Ever brightening

With a low melodious thunder ;
All day and all night it is ever drawn
From the brain of the purple mountain
Which stands in the distance yonder :

It springs on a level of bowery lawn,
And the mountain draws it from Heaven
above,

And it sings a song of undying love ;
And yet, tho' its voice be so clear and
full,

You never would hear it ; your ears are
so dull ;

So keep where you are : you are foul with
sin ;

It would shrink to the earth if you came
in.

THE SEA-FAIRIES

SLOW sail'd the weary mariners and saw,
Betwixt the green brink and the running
foam,

Sweet faces, rounded arms, and bosoms
prest

To little harps of gold ; and while they
mused

Whispering to each other half in fear,
Shrill music reach'd them on the middle
sea.

Whither away, whither away, whither
away ? fly no more.

Whither away from the high green field,
and the happy blossoming shore ?

Day and night to the billow the fountain
calls :

Down shower the gambolling waterfalls
From wandering over the lea :
Out of the live-green heart of the dells
They freshen the silvery-crimson shells,
And thick with white bells the clover-hill
swells

High over the full-toned sea :
O hither, come hither and furl your sails,
Come hither to me and to me :

Hither, come hither and frolic and play ;
Here it is only the mew that wails ;
We will sing to you all the day :

Mariner, mariner, furl your sails,
For here are the blissful downs and dales,
And merrily, merrily carol the gales,
And the spangle dances in bight and bay,
And the rainbow forms and flies on the
land

Over the islands free ;
And the rainbow lives in the curve of the
sand ;

Hither, come hither and see ;
And the rainbow hangs on the poisoning
wave,

And sweet is the colour of cove and cave,
And sweet shall your welcome be :

O hither, come hither, and be our lords,
For merry brides are we :
We will kiss sweet kisses, and speak
sweet words :

O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
With pleasure and love and jubilee :

O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten
When the sharp clear twang of the golden
chords

Runs up the ridged sea.

Who can light on as happy a shore

All the world o'er, all the world o'er ?

Whither away ? listen and stay : mariner,
mariner, fly no more.

THE DESERTED HOUSE

I

LIFE and Thought have gone away
Side by side,

Leaving door and windows wide :
Careless tenants they !

II

All within is dark as night :
In the windows is no light :
And no murmur at the door.
So frequent on its hinge before.

III

Close the door, the shutters close,
Or thro' the windows we shall see
The nakedness and vacancy
Of the dark deserted house.

IV

Come away : no more of mirth
Is here or merry-making sound.
The house was builded of the earth,
And shall fall again to ground.

V

Come away : for Life and Thought
Here no longer dwell ;
But in a city glorious—
A great and distant city—have bought
A mansion incorruptible.
Would they could have stayed with us !

THE DYING SWAN

I

THE plain was grassy, wild and bare,
Wide, wild, and open to the air,
Which had built up everywhere
An under-roof of doleful gray.
With an inner voice the river ran,
Adown it floated a dying swan,
And loudly did lament.
It was the middle of the day.
Ever the weary wind went on,
And took the reed-tops as it went.

II

Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold-white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.
One willow over the river wept,
And shook the wave as the wind did sigh :
Above in the wind was the swallow,

Chasing itself at its own wild will,
And far thro' the marish green and
still

The tangled water-courses slept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and
yellow.

III

The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul
Of that waste place with joy
Hidden in sorrow : at first to the ear
The warble was low, and full and clear ;
And floating about the under-sky,
Prevailing in weakness, the coronach
stole

Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear ;
But anon her awful jubilant voice,
With a music strange and manifold,
Flow'd forth on a carol free and bold :
As when a mighty people rejoice
With shawms, and with cymbals, and
harps of gold,
And the tumult of their acclaim is roll'd
Thro' the open gates of the city afar,
To the shepherd who watcheth the even-
ing star.

And the creeping mosses and clambering
weeds,

And the willow-branches hoar and dank,
And the wavy swell of the sighing
reeds,

And the wave-worn horns of the echoing
bank,

And the silvery marish-flowers that
throng

The desolate creeks and pools among,
Were flooded over with eddying song.

A DIRGE

I

Now is done thy long day's work ;
Fold thy palms across thy breast,
Fold thine arms, turn to thy rest.

Let them rave.

Shadows of the silver birk
Sweep the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

II

Thee nor carketh care nor slander ;
Nothing but the small cold worm
Fretteth thine enshrouded form.

Let them rave.

Light and shadow ever wander
O'er the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

III

Thou wilt not turn upon thy bed ;
Chaunteth not the brooding bee
Sweeter tones than calumny ?

Let them rave.

Thou wilt never raise thine head
From the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

IV

Crocodiles wept tears for thee ;
The woodbine and eglare
Drip sweeter dews than traitor's tear.

Let them rave.

Rain makes music in the tree
O'er the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

V

Round thee blow, self-pleached deep,
Bramble roses, faint and pale,
And long purples of the dale.

Let them rave.

These in every shower creep
Thro' the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

VI

The gold-eyed kingcups fine ;
The frail bluebell peereth over
Rare broidity of the purple clover.

Let them rave.

Kings have no such couch as thine,
As the green that folds thy grave.

Let them rave.

VII

Wild words wander here and there :
God's great gift of speech abused
Makes thy memory confused :

But let them rave.

The balm-cricket carols clear
In the green that folds thy grave.
Let them rave,

LOVE AND DEATH

WHAT time the mighty moon was gather-
ing light

Love paced the thymy plots of Paradise,
And all about him roll'd his lustrous eyes ;
When, turning round a cassia, full in view,
Death, walking all alone beneath a yew,
And talking to himself, first met his
sight :

'You must begone,' said Death, 'these
walks are mine.'

Love wept and spread his sheeny vans
for flight ;

Yet ere he parted said, 'This hour is
thine :

Thou art the shadow of life, and as the
tree

Stands in the sun and shadows all be-
neath,

So in the light of great eternity
Life eminent creates the shade of death ;

The shadow passeth when the tree shall
fall,

But I shall reign for ever over all.'

THE BALLAD OF ORIANA

My heart is wasted with my woe,
Oriana.

There is no rest for me below,
Oriana.

When the long dun wolds are ribb'd with
snow,

And loud the Norland whirlwinds blow,
Oriana,

Alone I wander to and fro,
Oriana.

Ere the light on dark was growing,
Oriana,

At midnight the cock was crowing,
Oriana :

Winds were blowing, waters flowing,
 We heard the steeds to battle going,
 Oriana ;
 Aloud the hollow bugle blowing,
 Oriana.

In the yew-wood black as night,
 Oriana,
 Ere I rode into the fight,
 Oriana,
 While blissful tears blinded my sight
 By star-shine and by moonlight,
 Oriana,
 I to thee my troth did plight,
 Oriana.

She stood upon the castle wall,
 Oriana :
 She watch'd my crest among them all,
 Oriana :
 She saw me fight, she heard me call,
 When forth there stept a foeman tall,
 Oriana,
 Atween me and the castle wall,
 Oriana.

The bitter arrow went aside,
 Oriana :
 The false, false arrow went aside,
 Oriana :
 The damned arrow glanced aside,
 And pierced thy heart, my love, my bride,
 Oriana !
 Thy heart, my life, my love, my bride,
 Oriana !

Oh ! narrow, narrow was the space,
 Oriana.
 Loud, loud rung out the bugle's brays,
 Oriana.
 Oh ! deathful stabs were dealt apace,
 The battle deepen'd in its place,
 Oriana ;
 But I was down upon my face,
 Oriana.

They should have stabb'd me where I lay,
 Oriana !
 How could I rise and come away,
 Oriana ?

How could I look upon the day ?
 They should have stabb'd me where I lay,
 Oriana—
 They should have trod me into clay,
 Oriana.

O breaking heart that will not break,
 Oriana !
 O pale, pale face so sweet and meek,
 Oriana !
 Thou smilest, but thou dost not speak,
 And then the tears run down my cheek,
 Oriana :
 What wantest thou ? whom dost thou seek,
 Oriana ?

I cry aloud : none hear my cries,
 Oriana.
 Thou comest atween me and the skies,
 Oriana.
 I feel the tears of blood arise
 Up from my heart unto my eyes,
 Oriana.
 Within thy heart my arrow lies,
 Oriana.

O cursed hand ! O cursed blow !
 Oriana !
 O happy thou that liest low,
 Oriana !
 All night the silence seems to flow
 Beside me in my utter woe,
 Oriana.
 A weary, weary way I go,
 Oriana.

When Norland winds pipe down the sea,
 Oriana,
 I walk, I dare not think of thee,
 Oriana.
 Thou liest beneath the greenwood tree,
 I dare not die and come to thee,
 Oriana.
 I hear the roaring of the sea,
 Oriana.

CIRCUMSTANCE

Two children in two neighbour villages
 Playing mad pranks along the heathy leas ;

Two strangers meeting at a festival ;
 Two lovers whispering by an orchard
 wall ;
 Two lives bound fast in one with golden
 ease ;
 Two graves grass-green beside a gray
 church-tower,
 Wash'd with still rains and daisy blos-
 somed ;
 Two children in one hamlet born and
 bred ;
 So runs the round of life from hour to
 hour.

THE MERMAN

I

WHO would be
 A merman bold,
 Sitting alone,
 Singing alone
 Under the sea,
 With a crown of gold,
 On a throne ?

II

I would be a merman bold,
 I would sit and sing the whole of the day ;
 I would fill the sea-halls with a voice of
 power ;
 But at night I would roam abroad and
 play
 With the mermaids in and out of the rocks,
 Dressing their hair with the white sea-
 flower ;
 And holding them back by their flowing
 locks
 I would kiss them often under the sea,
 And kiss them again till they kiss'd me
 Laughingly, laughingly ;
 And then we would wander away, away
 To the pale-green sea-groves straight and
 high,
 Chasing each other merrily.

III

There would be neither moon nor star ;
 But the wave would make music above
 us afar—

Low thunder and light in the magic
 night—

Neither moon nor star.

We would call aloud in the dreamy dells,
 Call to each other and whoop and cry

All night, merrily, merrily ;

They would pelt me with starry spangles
 and shells,

Laughing and clapping their hands be-
 tween,

All night, merrily, merrily :

But I would throw to them back in mine
 Turkis and agate and almondine :

Then leaping out upon them unseen

I would kiss them often under the sea,

And kiss them again till they kiss'd me

Laughingly, laughingly.

Oh ! what a happy life were mine

Under the hollow-hung ocean green !

Soft are the moss-beds under the sea ;

We would live merrily, merrily.

THE MERMAID

I

WHO would be
 A mermaid fair,
 Singing alone,
 Combing her hair
 Under the sea,
 In a golden curl
 With a comb of pearl,
 On a throne ?

II

I would be a mermaid fair ;
 I would sing to myself the whole of the
 day ;
 With a comb of pearl I would comb my
 hair ;
 And still as I comb'd I would sing and
 say,
 ' Who is it loves me ? who loves not me ?'
 I would comb my hair till my ringlets
 would fall

Low adown, low adown,

From under my starry sea-bud crown

Low adown and around,

And I should look like a fountain of gold

Springing alone
 With a shrill inner sound,
 Over the throne
 In the midst of the hall ;
 Till that great sea-snake under the sea
 From his coiled sleeps in the central deeps
 Would slowly trail himself sevenfold
 Round the hall where I sate, and look
 in at the gate
 With his large calm eyes for the love of
 me.
 And all the mermen under the sea
 Would feel their immortality
 Die in their hearts for the love of me.

III

But at night I would wander away, away,
 I would fling on each side my low-
 flowing locks,
 And lightly vault from the throne and play
 With the mermen in and out of the
 rocks ;
 We would run to and fro, and hide and
 seek,
 On the broad sea-wolds in the crimson
 shells,
 Whose silvery spikes are nighest the sea.
 But if any came near I would call, and
 shriek,
 And adown the steep like a wave I would
 leap
 From the diamond-ledges that jut from
 the dells ;
 For I would not be kiss'd by all who
 would list,
 Of the bold merry mermen under the
 sea ;
 They would sue me, and woo me, and
 flatter me,
 In the purple twilights under the sea ;
 But the king of them all would carry me,
 Woo me, and win me, and marry me,
 In the branching jaspers under the sea ;
 Then all the dry pied things that be
 In the hueless mosses under the sea
 Would curl round my silver feet silently,
 All looking up for the love of me.
 And if I should carol aloud, from aloft
 All things that are forked, and horned,
 and soft

Would lean out from the hollow sphere
 of the sea,
 All looking down for the love of me.

ADELINE

I

MYSTERY of mysteries,
 Faintly smiling Adeline,
 Scarce of earth nor all divine,
 Nor unhappy, nor at rest,
 But beyond expression fair
 With thy floating flaxen hair ;
 Thy rose-lips and full blue eyes
 Take the heart from out my breast.
 Wherefore those dim looks of thine,
 Shadowy, dreaming Adeline ?

II

Whence that aery bloom of thine,
 Like a lily which the sun
 Looks thro' in his sad decline,
 And a rose-bush leans upon,
 Thou that faintly smilest still,
 As a Naiad in a well,
 Looking at the set of day,
 Or a phantom two hours old
 Of a maiden past away,
 Ere the placid lips be cold ?
 Wherefore those faint smiles of thine,
 Spiritual Adeline ?

III

What hope or fear or joy is thine ?
 Who talketh with thee, Adeline ?
 For sure thou art not all alone.
 Do beating hearts of salient springs
 Keep measure with thine own ?
 Hast thou heard the butterflies
 What they say betwixt their wings ?
 Or in stillest evenings
 With what voice the violet woos
 To his heart the silver dews ?
 Or when little airs arise,
 How the merry bluebell rings
 To the mosses underneath ?
 Hast thou look'd upon the breath
 Of the lilies at sunrise ?

Wherefore that faint smile of thine,
Shadowy, dreaming Adeline?

IV

Some honey-converse feeds thy mind,
Some spirit of a crimson rose
In love with thee forgets to close
His curtains, wasting odorous sighs
All night long on darkness blind.
What aileth thee? whom waitest thou
With thy soften'd, shadow'd brow,
And those dew-lit eyes of thine,
Thou faint smiler, Adeline?

V

Lovest thou the doleful wind
When thou gazest at the skies?
Doth the low-tongued Orient
Wander from the side of the morn,
Dripping with Sabæan spice
On thy pillow, lowly bent
With melodious airs lovelorn,
Breathing Light against thy face,
While his locks a-drooping twined
Round thy neck in subtle ring
Make a carcanet of rays,
And ye talk together still,
In the language wherewith Spring
Letters cowslips on the hill?
Hence that look and smile of thine,
Spiritual Adeline.

MARGARET

I

O SWEET pale Margaret,
O rare pale Margaret,
What lit your eyes with tearful power,
Like moonlight on a falling shower?
Who lent you, love, your mortal dower
Of pensive thought and aspect pale,
Your melancholy sweet and frail
As perfume of the cuckoo-flower?
From the westward-winding flood,
From the evening-lighted wood,
From all things outward you have
won
A tearful grace, as tho' you stood
Between the rainbow and the sun.

The very smile before you speak,
That dimples your transparent cheek,
Encircles all the heart, and feedeth
The senses with a still delight
Of dainty sorrow without sound,
Like the tender amber round,
Which the moon about her spreadeth,
Moving thro' a fleecy night.

II

You love, remaining peacefully,
To hear the murmur of the strife,
But enter not the toil of life.
Your spirit is the calmed sea,
Laid by the tumult of the fight.
You are the evening star, always
Remaining betwixt dark and bright :
Lull'd echoes of laborious day
Come to you, gleams of mellow light
Float by you on the verge of night.

III

What can it matter, Margaret,
What songs below the waning stars
The lion-heart, Plantagenet,
Sang looking thro' his prison bars?
Exquisite Margaret, who can tell
The last wild thought of Chatelet,
Just ere the falling axe did part
The burning brain from the true heart,
Even in her sight he loved so well?

IV

A fairy shield your Genius made
And gave you on your natal day.
Your sorrow, only sorrow's shade,
Keeps real sorrow far away.
You move not in such solitudes,
You are not less divine,
But more human in your moods,
Than your twin-sister, Adeline.
Your hair is darker, and your eyes
Touch'd with a somewhat darker hue,
And less ærially blue,
But ever trembling thro' the dew
Of dainty-woeful sympathies.

V

O sweet pale Margaret,
O rare pale Margaret,

Come down, come down, and hear me
speak :

Tie up the ringlets on your cheek :

The sun is just about to set,

The arching limes are tall and shady,
And faint, rainy lights are seen,

Moving in the leavy beech.

Rise from the feast of sorrow, lady,

Where all day long you sit between

Joy and woe, and whisper each.

Or only look across the lawn,

Look out below your bower-caves,

Look down, and let your blue eyes dawn

Upon me thro' the jasmine-leaves.

ROSALIND

I

My Rosalind, my Rosalind,
My frolic falcon, with bright eyes,
Whose free delight, from any height of
rapid flight,

Stoops at all game that wing the skies,
My Rosalind, my Rosalind,
My bright-eyed, wild-eyed falcon, whither,
Careless both of wind and weather,
Whither fly ye, what game spy ye,
Up or down the streaming wind?

II

The quick lark's closest-caroll'd strains,
The shadow rushing up the sea,
The lightning flash atween the rains,
The sunlight driving down the lea,
The leaping stream, the very wind,
That will not stay, upon his way,
To stoop the cowslip to the plains,
Is not so clear and bold and free
As you, my falcon Rosalind.
You care not for another's pains,
Because you are the soul of joy,
Bright metal all without alloy.
Life shoots and glances thro' your veins,
And flashes off a thousand ways,
Thro' lips and eyes in subtle rays.
Your hawk-eyes are keen and bright,
Keen with triumph, watching still
To pierce me thro' with pointed light ;
But oftentimes they flash and glitter

Like sunshine on a dancing rill,
And your words are seeming-bitter,
Sharp and few, but seeming-bitter
From excess of swift delight.

III

Come down, come home, my Rosalind,
My gay young hawk, my Rosalind :
Too long you keep the upper skies ;
Too long you roam and wheel at will ;
But we must hood your random eyes,
That care not whom they kill,
And your cheek, whose brilliant hue
Is so sparkling-fresh to view,
Some red heath-flower in the dew,
Touch'd with sunrise. We must bind
And keep you fast, my Rosalind,
Fast, fast, my wild-eyed Rosalind,
And clip your wings, and make you love :
When we have lured you from above,
And that delight of frolic flight, by day
or night,
From North to South,
We'll bind you fast in silken cords,
And kiss away the bitter words
From off your rosy mouth.

ELEÄNORE

I

THY dark eyes open'd not,
Nor first reveal'd themselves to English
air,
For there is nothing here,
Which, from the outward to the inward
brought,
Moulded thy baby thought.
Far off from human neighbourhood,
Thou wert born, on a summer morn,
A mile beneath the cedar-wood.
Thy bounteous forehead was not fann'd
With breezes from our oaken glades,
But thou wert nursed in some delicious
land
Of lavish lights, and floating shades :
And flattering thy childish thought
The oriental fairy brought,
At the moment of thy birth,

From old well-heads of haunted rills,
 And the hearts of purple hills,
 And shadow'd coves on a sunny
 shore,
 The choicest wealth of all the
 earth,
 Jewel or shell, or starry ore,
 To deck thy cradle, Eleänore.

II

Or the yellow-banded bees,
 Thro' half-open lattices
 Coming in the scented breeze,
 Fed thee, a child, lying alone,
 With whitest honey in fairy gar-
 dens cull'd—
 A glorious child, dreaming alone,
 In silk-soft folds, upon yielding down,
 With the hum of swarming bees
 Into dreamful slumber lull'd.

III

Who may minister to thee?
 Summer herself should minister
 To thee, with fruitage golden-rinded
 On golden salvers, or it may be,
 Youngest Autumn, in a bower
 Grape-thicken'd from the light, and
 blinded
 With many a deep-hued bell-like
 flower
 Of fragrant trailers, when the air
 Sleepeth over all the heaven,
 And the crag that fronts the Even,
 All along the shadowing shore,
 Crimsoned over an inland mere,
 Eleänore !

IV

How may full-sail'd verse express,
 How may measured words adore
 The full-flowing harmony
 Of thy swan-like stateliness,
 Eleänore ?
 The luxuriant symmetry
 Of thy floating gracefulness,
 Eleänore ?
 Every turn and glance of thine,
 Every lineament divine,
 Eleänore,

And the steady sunset glow,
 That stays upon thee? For in thee
 Is nothing sudden, nothing single;
 Like two streams of incense free
 From one censer in one shrine,
 Thought and motion mingle,
 Mingle ever. Motions flow
 To one another, even as tho'
 They were modulated so
 To an unheard melody,
 Which lives about thee, and a sweep
 Of richest pauses, evermore
 Drawn from each other mellow-deep;
 Who may express thee, Eleänore ?

V

I stand before thee, Eleänore ;
 I see thy beauty gradually unfold,
 Daily and hourly, more and more.
 I muse, as in a trance, the while
 Slowly, as from a cloud of gold,
 Comes out thy deep ambrosial smile.
 I muse, as in a trance, when'er
 The languors of thy love-deep eyes
 Float on to me. I would I were
 So tranced, so rapt in ecstasies,
 To stand apart, and to adore,
 Gazing on thee for evermore,
 Serene, imperial Eleänore !

VI

Sometimes, with most intensity
 Gazing, I seem to see
 Thought folded over thought, smiling
 asleep,
 Slowly awaken'd, grow so full and deep
 In thy large eyes, that, overpower'd quite,
 I cannot veil, or droop my sight,
 But am as nothing in its light :
 As tho' a star, in inmost heaven set,
 Ev'n while we gaze on it,
 Should slowly round his orb, and slowly
 grow
 To a full face, there like a sun remain
 Fix'd—then as slowly fade again,
 And draw itself to what it was
 before ;
 So full, so deep, so slow,
 Thought seems to come and go -
 In thy large eyes, imperial Eleänore.

VII

As thunder-clouds that, hung on high,
 Roof'd the world with doubt and
 fear,
 Floating thro' an evening atmosphere,
 Grow golden all about the sky ;
 In thee all passion becomes passionless,
 Touch'd by thy spirit's mellowness,
 Losing his fire and active might
 In a silent meditation,
 Falling into a still delight,
 And luxury of contemplation :
 As waves that up a quiet cove
 Rolling slide, and lying still
 Shadow forth the banks at will :
 Or sometimes they swell and move,
 Pressing up against the land,
 With motions of the outer sea :
 And the self-same influence
 Controlleth all the soul and sense
 Of Passion gazing upon thee.
 His bow-string slacken'd, languid Love,
 Leaning his cheek upon his hand,
 Droops both his wings, regarding thee,
 And so would languish evermore,
 Serene, imperial Eleänore.

VIII

But when I see thee roam, with tresses
 unconfined,
 While the amorous, odorous wind
 Breathes low between the sunset and
 the moon ;
 Or, in a shadowy saloon,
 On silken cushions half reclined ;
 I watch thy grace ; and in its place
 My heart a charmed slumber keeps,
 While I muse upon thy face ;
 And a languid fire creeps
 Thro' my veins to all my frame,
 Dissolvingly and slowly : soon
 From thy rose-red lips MY name
 Floweth ; and then, as in a swoon,
 With dinning sound my ears are rife,
 My tremulous tongue faltereth,
 I lose my colour, I lose my breath,
 I drink the cup of a costly death,
 Brimm'd with delirious draughts of warm-
 est life.

I die with my delight, before
 I hear what I would hear from
 thee ;

Yet tell my name again to me,
 I *would* be dying evermore,
 So dying ever, Eleänore.

KATE

I KNOW her by her angry air,
 Her bright black eyes, her bright black
 hair,

Her rapid laughter wild and shrill,
 As laughter of the woodpecker
 From the bosom of a hill.

'Tis Kate—she sayeth what she will :
 For Kate hath an unbridled tongue,
 Clear as the twanging of a harp.
 Her heart is like a throbbing star.

Kate hath a spirit ever strung
 Like a new bow, and bright and sharp
 As edges of the scymetar.

Whence shall she take a fitting mate ?
 For Kate no common love will feel ;
 My woman-soldier, gallant Kate,
 As pure and true as blades of steel.

Kate saith 'the world is void of might.'

Kate saith 'the men are gilded flies.'

Kate snaps her fingers at my vows ;
 Kate will not hear of lovers' sighs.

I would I were an arm'd knight,
 Far-famed for well-won enterprise,
 And wearing on my swarthy brows
 The garland of new-wreathed emprise :

For in a moment I would pierce
 The blackest files of clanging fight,
 And strongly strike to left and right,
 In dreaming of my lady's eyes.

Oh ! Kate loves well the bold and
 fierce ;

But none are bold enough for Kate,
 She cannot find a fitting mate.

I

MY life is full of weary days,
 But good things have not kept aloof,
 Nor wander'd into other ways :
 I have not lack'd thy mild reproof,
 Nor golden largess of thy praise.

And now shake hands across the brink
 Of that deep grave to which I go :
 Shake hands once more : I cannot sink
 So far—far down, but I shall know
 Thy voice, and answer from below.

II

When in the darkness over me
 The four-handed mole shall scrape,
 Plant thou no dusky cypress-tree,
 Nor wreath thy cap with doleful crape,
 But pledge me in the flowing grape.

And when the sappy field and wood
 Grow green beneath the showery gray,
 And rugged barks begin to bud,
 And thro' damp holts new-flush'd with
 may,

Ring sudden scritchings of the jay,

Then let wise Nature work her will,
 And on my clay her darnel grow ;
 Come only, when the days are still,
 And at my headstone whisper low,
 And tell me if the woodbines blow.

EARLY SONNETS

I

TO —

As when with downcast eyes we muse and
 brood,

And ebb into a former life, or seem
 To lapse far back in some confused dream
 To states of mystical similitude ;

If one but speaks or hems or stirs his chair,
 Ever the wonder waxeth more and more,
 So that we say, ' All this hath been before,
 All this hath been, I know not when or
 where.'

So, friend, when first I look'd upon your
 face,

Our thought gave answer each to each, so
 true—

Opposed mirrors each reflecting each—
 That tho' I knew not in what time or place,
 Methought that I had often met with you,
 And either lived in either's heart and
 speech.

II

TO J. M. K.

My hope and heart is with thee—thou
 wilt be

A latter Luther, and a soldier-priest
 To scare church-harpies from the master's
 feast ;

Our dusted velvets have much need of
 thee :

Thou art no sabbath-drawler of old saws,
 Distill'd from some worm - canker'd
 homily ;

But spurr'd at heart with fieriest energy
 To embattail and to wall about thy cause
 With iron-worded proof, hating to hark
 The humming of the drowsy pulpit-drone
 Half God's good sabbath, while the worn-
 out clerk

Brow-beats his desk below. Thou from
 a throne

Mounted in heaven wilt shoot into the
 dark

Arrows of lightnings. I will stand and
 mark.

III

MINE be the strength of spirit, full and
 free,

Like some broad river rushing down
 alone,

With the selfsame impulse wherewith he
 was thrown

From his loud fount upon the echoing
 lea :—

Which with increasing might doth forward
 flee

By town, and tower, and hill, and cape,
 and isle,

And in the middle of the green salt sea
 Keeps his blue waters fresh for many a mile.

Mine be the power which ever to its sway
 Will win the wise at once, and by degrees
 May into uncongenial spirits flow ;

Ev'n as the warm gulf-stream of Florida
 Floats far away into the Northern seas

The lavish growths of southern Mexico.

IV

ALEXANDER

WARRIOR of God, whose strong right
 arm debased
 The throne of Persia, when her Satrap
 bled
 At Issus by the Syrian gates, or fled
 Beyond the Memmian naphtha-pits, dis-
 graced
 For ever—thee (thy pathway sand-erased)
 Gliding with equal crowns two serpents
 led
 Joyful to that palm-planted fountain-fed
 Ammonian Oasis in the waste.
 There in a silent shade of laurel brown
 Apart the Chamian Oracle divine
 Shelter'd his unapproached mysteries :
 High things were spoken there, unhanded
 down ;
 Only they saw thee from the secret shrine
 Returning with hot cheek and kindled
 eyes.

V

BUONAPARTE

HE thought to quell the stubborn hearts
 of oak,
 Madman !—to chain with chains, and bind
 with bands
 That island queen who sways the floods
 and lands
 From Ind to Ind, but in fair daylight woke,
 When from her wooden walls,—lit by
 sure hands,—
 With thunders, and with lightnings, and
 with smoke,—
 Peal after peal, the British battle broke,
 Lulling the brine against the Coptic sands.
 We taught him high mowling moods, when El-
 sinore
 Heard the war moan along the distant sea,
 Rocking with shatter'd spars, with sudden
 fires
 Flamed over : at Trafalgar yet once more
 We taught him : late he learned humility
 Perforce, like those whom Gideon school'd
 with briers.

VI

POLAND

How long, O God, shall men be ridden
 down,
 And trampled under by the last and least
 Of men ? The heart of Poland hath not
 ceased
 To quiver, tho' her sacred blood doth
 drown
 The fields, and out of every smouldering
 town
 Cries to Thee, lest brute Power be in-
 creased,
 Till that o'ergrown Barbarian in the East
 Transgress his ample bound to some new
 crown :—
 Cries to Thee, ' Lord, how long shall
 these things be ?
 How long this icy-hearted Muscovite
 Oppress the region ? ' Us, O Just and
 Good,
 Forgive, who smiled when she was torn
 in three ;
 Us, who stand now, when we should aid
 the right—
 A matter to be wept with tears of blood !

VII

CARESS'D or chidden by the slender hand,
 And singing airy trifles this or that,
 Light Hope at Beauty's call would perch
 and stand,
 And run thro' every change of sharp and
 flat ;
 And Fancy came and at her pillow sat,
 When Sleep had bound her in his rosy
 band,
 And chased away the still-recurring gnat,
 And woke her with a lay from fairy land.
 But now they live with Beauty less and
 less,
 For Hope is other Hope and wanders far,
 Nor cares to lisp in love's delicious creeds ;
 And Fancy watches in the wilderness,
 Poor Fancy sadder than a single star,
 That sets at twilight in a land of reeds.

VIII

THE form, the form alone is eloquent !
 A nobler yearning never broke her rest
 Than but to dance and sing, be gaily
 drest,
 And win all eyes with all accomplish-
 ment :
 Yet in the whirling dances as we went,
 My fancy made me for a moment blest
 To find my heart so near the beauteous
 breast
 That once had power to rob it of content.
 A moment came the tenderness of tears,
 The phantom of a wish that once could
 move,
 A ghost of passion that no smiles re-
 store—
 For ah ! the slight coquette, she cannot
 love,
 And if you kiss'd her feet a thousand
 years,
 She still would take the praise, and care
 no more.

IX

WAN Sculptor, weepst thou to take the
 cast
 Of those dead lineaments that near thee
 lie ?
 O sorrowest thou, pale Painter, for the
 past,
 In painting some dead friend from memory ?
 Weep on : beyond his object Love can
 last :
 His object lives : more cause to weep
 have I :
 My tears, no tears of love, are flowing fast,
 No tears of love, but tears that Love can
 die.
 I pledge her not in any cheerful cup,
 Nor care to sit beside her where she sits—
 Ah pity—hint it not in human tones,
 But breathe it into earth and close it up
 With secret death for ever, in the pits
 Which some green Christmas crams with
 weary bones.

X

IF I were loved, as I desire to be,
 What is there in the great sphere of the
 earth,

And range of evil between death and birth,
 That I should fear,—if I were loved by
 thee ?

All the inner, all the outer world of pain
 Clear Love would pierce and cleave, if
 thou wert mine,

As I have heard that, somewhere in the
 main,

Fresh-water springs come up through
 bitter brine.

'Twere joy, not fear, claspt hand-in-hand
 with thee,

To wait for death—mute—careless of all
 ills,

Apart upon a mountain, tho' the surge
 Of some new deluge from a thousand hills
 Flung leagues of roaring foam into the
 gorge

Below us, as far on as eye could see.

XI

THE BRIDESMAID

O BRIDESMAID, ere the happy knot was
 tied,

Thine eyes so wept that they could hardly
 see ;

Thy sister smiled and said, ' No tears for
 me !

A happy bridesmaid makes a happy bride.'
 And then, the couple standing side by
 side,

Love lighted down between them full of
 glee,

And over his left shoulder laugh'd at
 thee,

' O happy bridesmaid, make a happy
 bride.'

And all at once a pleasant truth I learn'd,
 For while the tender service made thee
 weep,

I loved thee for the tear thou couldst not
 hide,

And prest thy hand, and knew the press
 return'd,

And thought, ' My life is sick of single
 sleep :

O happy bridesmaid, make a happy
 bride !'

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

AND OTHER POEMS

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

PART I

ON either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by

To many-tower'd Camelot;

And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river

Flowing down to Camelot.

Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd

Skimming down to Camelot:

But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?

Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,

Down to tower'd Camelot:

And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.'

PART II

THERE she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.

She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay

To look down to Camelot.

She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.

There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;

And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A BOW-SHOT from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.

A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,

That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot :
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd ;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode ;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide ;
The mirror crack'd from side to side ;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

IN the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complain-
ing,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot ;
Down she came and found a boat

Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay ;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot :
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer ;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot :
But Lancelot mused a little space ;
He said, 'She has a lovely face ;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'

MARIANA IN THE SOUTH

WITH one black shadow at its feet,
 The house thro' all the level shines,
 Close-latticed to the brooding heat,
 And silent in its dusty vines :
 A faint-blue ridge upon the right,
 An empty river-bed before,
 And shallows on a distant shore,
 In glaring sand and inlets bright.
 But 'Ave Mary,' made she moan,
 And 'Ave Mary,' night and morn,
 And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
 To live forgotten, and loveforlorn.'

She, as her carol sadder grew,
 From brow and bosom slowly down
 Thro' rosy taper fingers drew
 Her streaming curls of deepest brown
 To left and right, and made appear
 Still-lighted in a secret shrine,
 Her melancholy eyes divine,
 The home of woe without a tear.
 And 'Ave Mary,' was her moan,
 'Madonna, sad is night and morn,'
 And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
 To live forgotten, and loveforlorn.'

Till all the crimson changed, and past
 Into deep orange o'er the sea,
 Low on her knees herself she cast,
 Before Our Lady murmur'd she ;
 Complaining, 'Mother, give me grace
 To help me of my weary load.'
 And on the liquid mirror glow'd
 The clear perfection of her face.
 'Is this the form,' she made her
 moan,
 'That won his praises night and
 morn ?'
 And 'Ah,' she said, 'but I wake
 alone,
 I sleep forgotten, I wake forlorn.'

Nor bird would sing, nor lamb would bleat,
 Nor any cloud would cross the vault,
 But day increased from heat to heat,
 On stony drought and steaming salt ;
 Till now at noon she slept again,
 And seem'd knee-deep in mountain
 grass,
 And heard her native breezes pass,

And runlets babbling down the glen.
 She breathed in sleep a lower moan,
 And murmuring, as at night and
 morn,
 She thought, 'Myspirit is here alone,
 Walks forgotten, and is forlorn.'

Dreaming, she knew it was a dream :
 She felt he was and was not there.
 She woke : the babble of the stream
 Fell, and, without, the steady glare
 Shrank one sick willow sere and small.
 The river-bed was dusty-white ;
 And all the furnace of the light
 Struck up against the blinding wall.
 She whisper'd, with a stifled moan
 More inward than at night or morn,
 'Sweet Mother, let me not here alone
 Live forgotten and die forlorn.'

And, rising, from her bosom drew
 Old letters, breathing of her worth,
 For 'Love,' they said, 'must needs be
 true,
 To what is loveliest upon earth.'
 An image seem'd to pass the door,
 To look at her with slight, and say
 'But now thy beauty flows away,
 So be alone for evermore.'
 'O cruel heart,' she changed her tone,
 'And cruel love, whose end is scorn,
 Is this the end to be left alone,
 To live forgotten, and die forlorn ?'

But sometimes in the falling day
 An image seem'd to pass the door,
 To look into her eyes and say,
 'But thou shalt be alone no more.'
 And flaming downward over all
 From heat to heat the day decreased,
 And slowly rounded to the east
 The one black shadow from the wall.
 'The day to night,' she made her
 moan,
 'The day to night, the night to
 morn,
 And day and night I am left alone
 To live forgotten, and loveforlorn.'

At eve a dry cicala sung,
 There came a sound as of the sea ;

Backward the lattice-blind she flung,
 And lean'd upon the balcony.
 There all in spaces rosy-bright
 Large Hesper glitter'd on her tears,
 And deepening thro' the silent spheres
 Heaven over Heaven rose the night.
 And weeping then she made her moan,
 'The night comes on that knows not
 morn,
 When I shall cease to be all alone,
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

THE TWO VOICES

A STILL small voice spake unto me,
 'Thou art so full of misery,
 Were it not better not to be?'

Then to the still small voice I said;
 'Let me not cast in endless shade
 What is so wonderfully made.'

To which the voice did urge reply;
 'To-day I saw the dragon-fly
 Come from the wells where he did lie.

'An inner impulse rent the veil
 Of his old husk: from head to tail
 Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.

'He dried his wings: like gauze they grew;
 Thro' crofts and pastures wet with dew
 A living flash of light he flew.'

I said, 'When first the world began,
 Young Nature thro' five cycles ran,
 And in the sixth she moulded man.

'She gave him mind, the lordliest
 Proportion, and, above the rest,
 Dominion in the head and breast.'

Thereto the silent voice replied;
 'Self-blinded are you by your pride:
 Look up thro' night: the world is wide.

'This truth within thy mind rehearse,
 That in a boundless universe
 Is boundless better, boundless worse.

'Think you this mould of hopes and fears
 Could find no statelier than his peers
 In yonder hundred million spheres?'

It spake, moreover, in my mind:
 'Tho' thou wert scatter'd to the wind,
 Yet is there plenty of the kind.'

Then did my response clearer fall:
 'No compound of this earthly ball
 Is like another, all in all.'

To which he answer'd scoffingly;
 'Good soul! suppose I grant it thee,
 Who'll weep for thy deficiency?

'Or will one beam be less intense,
 When thy peculiar difference
 Is cancell'd in the world of sense?'

I would have said, 'Thou canst not know,'
 But my full heart, that work'd below,
 Rain'd thro' my sight its overflow.

Again the voice spake unto me:
 'Thou art so steep'd in misery,
 Surely 'twere better not to be.

'Thine anguish will not let thee sleep,
 Nor any train of reason keep:
 Thou canst not think, but thou wilt weep.'

I said, 'The years with change advance:
 If I make dark my countenance,
 I shut my life from happier chance.

'Some turn this sickness yet might take,
 Ev'n yet.' But he: 'What drug can make
 A wither'd palsy cease to shake?'

I wept, 'Tho' I should die, I know
 That all about the thorn will blow
 In tufts of rosy-tinted snow;

'And men, thro' novel spheres of thought
 Still moving after truth long sought,
 Will learn new things when I am not.'

'Yet,' said the secret voice, 'some time,
 Sooner or later, will gray prime
 Make thy grass hoar with early rime.

'Not less swift souls that yearn for light,
 Rapt after heaven's starry flight,
 Would sweep the tracts of day and night.

'Not less the bee would range her cells,
 The furzy prickly fire the dells,
 The foxglove cluster dappled bells.'

I said that 'all the years invent ;
Each month is various to present
The world with some development.

'Were this not well, to bide mine hour,
Tho' watching from a ruin'd tower
How grows the day of human power ?'

'The highest-mounted mind,' he said,
'Still sees the sacred morning spread
The silent summit overhead.

'Will thirty seasons render plain
Those lonely lights that still remain,
Just breaking over land and main ?

'Or make that morn, from his cold crown
And crystal silence creeping down,
Flood with full daylight glebe and town ?

'Forerun thy peers, thy time, and let
Thy feet, millenniums hence, be set
In midst of knowledge, dream'd not yet.

'Thou hast not gain'd a real height,
Nor art thou nearer to the light,
Because the scale is infinite.

'Twere better not to breathe or speak,
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
And seem to find, but still to seek.

'Moreover, but to seem to find
Asks what thou lackest, thought resign'd,
A healthy frame, a quiet mind.'

I said, 'When I am gone away,
'He dared not tarry,' men will say,
Doing dishonour to my clay.'

'This is more vile,' he made reply,
'To breathe and loathe, to live and sigh,
Than once from dread of pain to die.

'Sick art thou—a divided will
Still heaping on the fear of ill
The fear of men, a coward still.

'Do men love thee ? Art thou so bound
To men, that how thy name may sound
Will vex thee lying underground ?

'The memory of the wither'd leaf
In endless time is scarce more brief
Than of the garner'd Autumn-sheaf.

'Go, vexed Spirit, sleep in trust ;
The right ear, that is fill'd with dust,
Hears little of the false or just.'

'Hard task, to pluck resolve,' I cried,
'From emptiness and the waste wide
Of that abyss, or scornful pride !

'Nay—rather yet that I could raise
One hope that warm'd me in the days
While still I yearn'd for human praise.

'When, wide in soul and bold of tongue,
Among the tents I paused and sung,
The distant battle flash'd and rung.

'I sung the joyful Pæan clear,
And, sitting, burnish'd without fear
The brand, the buckler, and the spear—

'Waiting to strive a happy strife,
To war with falsehood to the knife,
And not to lose the good of life—

'Some hidden principle to move,
To put together, part and prove,
And mete the bounds of hate and love—

'As far as might be, to carve out
Free space for every human doubt,
That the whole mind might orb about—

'To search thro' all I felt or saw,
The springs of life, the depths of awe,
And reach the law within the law :

'At least, not rotting like a weed,
But, having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of further thought and deed,

'To pass, when Life her light withdraws,
Not void of righteous self-applause,
Nor in a merely selfish cause—

'In some good cause, not in mine own,
To perish, wept for, honour'd, known,
And like a warrior overthrown ;

'Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears,
When, soil'd with noble dust, he hears
His country's war-song thrill his ears :

'Then dying of a mortal stroke,
What time the foeman's line is broke,
And all the war is roll'd in smoke.'

'Yea!' said the voice, 'thy dream was good,
While thou abodest in the bud.
It was the stirring of the blood.

'If Nature put not forth her power
About the opening of the flower,
Who is it that could live an hour?

'Then comes the check, the change, the
fall,
Pain rises up, old pleasures pall.
There is one remedy for all.

'Yet hadst thou, thro' enduring pain,
Link'd month to month with such a chain
Of knitted purport, all were vain.

'Thou hadst not between death and birth
Dissolved the riddle of the earth.
So were thy labour little-worth.

'That men with knowledge merely play'd,
I told thee—hardly nigher made,
Tho' scaling slow from grade to grade;

'Much less this dreamer, deaf and blind,
Named man, may hope some truth to find,
That bears relation to the mind.

'For every worm beneath the moon
Draws different threads, and late and soon
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon.

'Cry, faint not: either Truth is born
Beyond the polar gleam forlorn,
Or in the gateways of the morn.

'Cry, faint not, climb: the summits slope
Beyond the furthest flights of hope,
Wrapt in dense cloud from base to cope.

'Sometimes a little corner shines,
As over rainy mist inclines
A gleaming crag with belts of pines.

'I will go forward, sayest thou,
I shall not fail to find her now.
Look up, the fold is on her brow.

'If straight thy track, or if oblique,
Thou know'st not. Shadows thou dost
strike,
Embracing cloud, Ixion-like;

'And owning but a little more
Than beasts, abidest lame and poor,
Calling thyself a little lower

'Than angels. Cease to wail and brawl!
Why inch by inch to darkness crawl?
There is one remedy for all.'

'O dull, one-sided voice,' said I,
'Wilt thou make everything a lie,
To flatter me that I may die?

'I know that age to age succeeds,
Blowing a noise of tongues and deeds,
A dust of systems and of creeds.

'I cannot hide that some have striven,
Achieving calm, to whom was given
The joy that mixes man with Heaven:

'Who, rowing hard against the stream,
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream;

'But heard, by secret transport led,
Ev'n in the charnels of the dead,
The murmur of the fountain-head—

'Which did accomplish their desire,
Bore and forebore, and did not tire,
Like Stephen, an unquenched fire.

'He heeded not reviling tones,
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
Tho' cursed and scorn'd, and bruised
with stones:

'But looking upward, full of grace,
He pray'd, and from a happy place
God's glory smote him on the face.'

The sullen answer slid betwixt:
'Not that the grounds of hope were
fix'd,
The elements were kindlier mix'd.'

I said, 'I toil beneath the curse,
But, knowing not the universe,
I fear to slide from bad to worse.

'And that, in seeking to undo
One riddle, and to find the true,
I knit a hundred others new:

'Or that this anguish fleeting hence,
Unmanacled from bonds of sense,
Be fix'd and froz'n to permanence:

'For I go, weak from suffering here:
Naked I go, and void of cheer:
What is it that I may not fear?'

'Consider well,' the voice replied,
'His face, that two hours since hath died ;
Wilt thou find passion, pain or pride ?

'Will he obey when one commands ?
Or answer should one press his hands ?
He answers not, nor understands.

'His palms are folded on his breast :
There is no other thing express'd
But long disquiet merged in rest.

'His lips are very mild and meek :
Tho' one should smite him on the cheek,
And on the mouth, he will not speak.

'His little daughter, whose sweet face
He kiss'd, taking his last embrace,
Becomes dishonour to her race—

'His sons grow up that bear his name,
Some grow to honour, some to shame,—
But he is chill to praise or blame.

'He will not hear the north-wind rave,
Nor, moaning, household shelter crave
From winter rains that beat his grave.

'High up the vapours fold and swim :
About him broods the twilight dim :
The place he knew forgetteth him.'

'If all be dark, vague voice,' I said,
'These things are wrapt in doubt and
dread,
Nor canst thou show the dead are dead.

'The sap dries up : the plant declines.
A deeper tale my heart divines.
Know I not Death ? the outward signs ?

'I found him when my years were few ;
A shadow on the graves I knew,
And darkness in the village yew.

'From grave to grave the shadow crept :
In her still place the morning wept :
Touch'd by his feet the daisy slept.

'The simple senses crown'd his head :
"Omega ! thou art Lord," they said,
"We find no motion in the dead."

'Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,
Should that plain fact, as taught by these,
Not make him sure that he shall cease ?

'Who forged that other influence,
That heat of inward evidence,
By which he doubts against the sense ?

'He owns the fatal gift of eyes,
That read his spirit blindly wise,
Not simple as a thing that dies.

'Here sits he shaping wings to fly :
His heart forebodes a mystery :
He names the name Eternity.

'That type of Perfect in his mind
In Nature can he nowhere find.
He sows himself on every wind.

'He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro' thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.

'The end and the beginning vex
His reason : many things perplex,
With motions, checks, and counterchecks.

'He knows a baseness in his blood
At such strange war with something
good,
He may not do the thing he would.

'Heaven opens inward, chasms yawn,
Vast images in glimmering dawn,
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn.

'Ah ! sure within him and without,
Could his dark wisdom find it out,
There must be answer to his doubt,

'But thou canst answer not again.
With thine own weapon art thou slain,
Or thou wilt answer but in vain.

'The doubt would rest, I dare not solve.
In the same circle we revolve.
Assurance only breeds resolve.'

As when a billow, blown against,
Falls back, the voice with which I fenced
A little ceased, but recommenced.

'Where wert thou when thy father play'd
In his free field, and pastime made,
A merry boy in sun and shade ?

'A merry boy they call'd him then,
He sat upon the knees of men
In days that never come again.

'Before the little ducts began
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
Their course, till thou wert also man :

'Who took a wife, who rear'd his race,
Whose wrinkles gather'd on his face,
Whose troubles number with his days :

'A life of nothings, nothing-worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth !'

'These words,' I said, 'are like the rest ;
No certain clearness, but at best
A vague suspicion of the breast :

'But if I grant, thou mightst defend
The thesis which thy words intend—
That to begin implies to end ;

'Yet how should I for certain hold,
Because my memory is so cold,
That I first was in human mould ?

'I cannot make this matter plain,
But I would shoot, howe'er in vain,
A random arrow from the brain.

'It may be that no life is found,
Which only to one engine bound
Falls off, but cycles always round.

'As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping thro' from state to state.

'As here we find in trances, men
Forget the dream that happens then,
Until they fall in trance again.

'So might we, if our state were such
As one before, remember much,
For those two likes might meet and touch.

'But, if I lapsed from nobler place,
Some legend of a fallen race
Alone might hint of my disgrace ;

'Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height,
Some yearning toward the lamps of
night ;

'Or if thro' lower lives I came—
Tho' all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame—

'I might forget my weaker lot ;
For is not our first year forgot ?
The haunts of memory echo not.

'And men, whose reason long was blind,
From cells of madness unconfined,
Oft lose whole years of darker mind.

'Much more, if first I floated free,
As naked essence, must I be
Incompetent of memory :

'For memory dealing but with time,
And he with matter, could she climb
Beyond her own material prime ?

'Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

'Of something felt, like something here ;
Of something done, I know not where ;
Such as no language may declare.'

The still voice laugh'd. 'I talk,' said he,
'Not with thy dreams. Suffice it thee
Thy pain is a reality.'

'But thou,' said I, 'hast missed thy
mark,
Who sought'st to wreck my mortal ark,
By making all the horizon dark.

'Why not set forth, if I should do
This rashness, that which might ensue
With this old soul in organs new ?

'Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly long'd for death.

''Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh life, not death, for which we pant ;
More life, and fuller, that I want.'

I ceased, and sat as one forlorn.
Then said the voice, in quiet scorn,
'Behold, it is the Sabbath morn.'

And I arose, and I released
The casement, and the light increased
With freshness in the dawning east.

Like soften'd airs that blowing steal,
When meres begin to uncongeal,
The sweet church bells began to peal.

On to God's house the people prest :
Passing the place where each must rest,
Each enter'd like a welcome guest.

One walk'd between his wife and child,
With measured footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood
Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure,
The little maiden walk'd demure,
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,
My frozen heart began to beat,
Remembering its ancient heat.

I blest them, and they wander'd on :
I spoke, but answer came there none :
The dull and bitter voice was gone.

A second voice was at mine ear,
A little whisper silver-clear,
A murmur, 'Be of better cheer.'

As from some blissful neighbourhood,
A notice faintly understood,
'I see the end, and know the good.'

A little hint to solace woe,
A hint, a whisper breathing low,
'I may not speak of what I know.'

Like an Æolian harp that wakes
No certain air, but overtakes
Far thought with music that it makes :

Such seem'd the whisper at my side :
'What is it thou knowest, sweet voice ?'
I cried.

'A hidden hope,' the voice replied :

So heavenly-toned, that in that hour
From out my sullen heart a power
Broke, like the rainbow from the shower,

To feel, altho' no tongue can prove,
That every cloud, that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love.

And forth into the fields I went,
And Nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.

I wonder'd at the bounteous hours,
The slow result of winter showers :
You scarce could see the grass for flowers.

I wonder'd, while I paced along :
The woods were fill'd so full with song,
There seem'd no room for sense of wrong ;

And all so variously wrought,
I marvell'd how the mind was brought
To anchor by one gloomy thought ;

And wherefore rather I made choice
To commune with that barren voice,
Than him that said, 'Rejoice ! Rejoice !'

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER

I SEE the wealthy miller yet,
His double chin, his portly size,
And who that knew him could forget
The busy wrinkles round his eyes ?
The slow wise smile that, round about
His dusty forehead drily curl'd,
Seem'd half-within and half-without,
And full of dealings with the world ?

In yonder chair I see him sit,
Three fingers round the old silver cup—
I see his gray eyes twinkle yet
At his own jest—gray eyes lit up
With summer lightnings of a soul
So full of summer warmth, so glad,
So healthy, sound, and clear and whole,
His memory scarce can make me sad.

Yet fill my glass : give me one kiss :
My own sweet Alice, we must die.
There's somewhat in this world amiss
Shall be unriddled by and by.

There's somewhat flows to us in life,
 But more is taken quite away.
 Pray, Alice, pray, my darling wife,
 That we may die the self-same day.

Have I not found a happy earth?
 I least should breathe a thought of
 pain.

Would God renew me from my birth
 I'd almost live my life again.
 So sweet it seems with thee to walk,
 And once again to woo thee mine—
 It seems in after-dinner talk
 Across the walnuts and the wine—

To be the long and listless boy
 Late-left an orphan of the squire,
 Where this old mansion mounted high
 Looks down upon the village spire :
 For even here, where I and you
 Have lived and loved alone so long,
 Each morn my sleep was broken thro'
 By some wild skylark's matin song.

And oft I heard the tender dove
 In firry woodlands making moan ;
 But ere I saw your eyes, my love,
 I had no motion of my own.
 For scarce my life with fancy play'd
 Before I dream'd that pleasant dream—
 Still hither thither idly sway'd
 Like those long mosses in the stream.

Or from the bridge I lean'd to hear
 The milldam rushing down with noise,
 And see the minnows everywhere
 In crystal eddies glance and poise,
 The tall flag-flowers when they sprung
 Below the range of stepping-stones,
 Or those three chestnuts near, that hung
 In masses thick with milky cones.

But, Alice, what an hour was that,
 When after roving in the woods
 ('Twas April then), I came and sat
 Below the chestnuts, when their buds
 Were glistening to the breezy blue ;
 And on the slope, an absent fool,
 I cast me down, nor thought of you,
 But angled in the higher pool.

A love-song I had somewhere read,
 An echo from a measured strain,
 Beat time to nothing in my head
 From some odd corner of the brain.
 It haunted me, the morning long,
 With weary sameness in the rhymes,
 The phantom of a silent song,
 That went and came a thousand times.

Then leapt a trout. In lazy mood
 I watch'd the little circles die ;
 They past into the level flood,
 And there a vision caught my eye ;
 The reflex of a beauteous form,
 A glowing arm, a gleaming neck,
 As when a sunbeam wavers warm
 Within the dark and dimpled beck.

For you remember, you had set,
 That morning, on the casement-edge
 A long green box of mignonette,
 And you were leaning from the ledge :
 And when I raised my eyes, above
 They met with two so full and bright—
 Such eyes ! I swear to you, my love,
 That these have never lost their light.

I loved, and love dispell'd the fear
 That I should die an early death :
 For love possess'd the atmosphere,
 And fill'd the breast with purer breath.
 My mother thought, What ails the boy ?
 For I was alter'd, and began
 To move about the house with joy,
 And with the certain step of man.

I loved the brimming wave that swam
 Thro' quiet meadows round the mill,
 The sleepy pool above the dam,
 The pool beneath it never still,
 The meal-sacks on the whiten'd floor,
 The dark round of the dripping
 wheel,
 The very air about the door
 Made misty with the floating meal.

And oft in ramblings on the wold,
 When April nights began to blow,
 And April's crescent glimmer'd cold,
 I saw the village lights below ;

I knew your taper far away,
 And full at heart of trembling hope,
 From off the wold I came, and lay
 Upon the freshly-flower'd slope.

The deep brook groan'd beneath the mill;
 And 'by that lamp,' I thought, 'shesits!'
 The white chalk-quarry from the hill
 Gleam'd to the flying moon by fits.
 'O that I were beside her now!
 O will she answer if I call?
 O would she give me vow for vow,
 Sweet Alice, if I told her all?'

Sometimes I saw you sit and spin;
 And, in the pauses of the wind,
 Sometimes I heard you sing within;
 Sometimes your shadow cross'd the
 blind.

At last you rose and moved the light,
 And the long shadow of the chair
 Flitted across into the night,
 And all the casement darken'd there.

But when at last I dared to speak,
 The lanes, you know, were white with
 may,
 Your ripe lips moved not, but your cheek
 Flush'd like the coming of the day;
 And so it was—half-sly, half-shy,
 You would, and would not, little one!
 Although I pleaded tenderly,
 And you and I were all alone.

And slowly was my mother brought
 To yield consent to my desire:
 She wish'd me happy, but she thought
 I might have look'd a little higher;
 And I was young—too young to wed:
 'Yet must I love her for your sake;
 Go fetch your Alice here,' she said:
 Her eyelid quiver'd as she spake.

And down I went to fetch my bride:
 But, Alice, you were ill at ease;
 This dress and that by turns you tried,
 Too fearful that you should not please.
 I loved you better for your fears,
 I knew you could not look but well;
 And dews, that would have fall'n in tears,
 I kiss'd away before they fell.

I watch'd the little flutterings,
 The doubt my mother would not see;
 She spoke at large of many things,
 And at the last she spoke of me;
 And turning look'd upon your face,
 'As near this door you sat apart,
 And rose, and, with a silent grace
 Approaching, press'd you heart to heart.

Ah, well—but sing the foolish song
 I gave you, Alice, on the day
 When, arm in arm, we went along,
 A pensive pair, and you were gay
 With bridal flowers—that I may seem,
 As in the nights of old, to lie
 Beside the mill-wheel in the stream,
 While those full chestnuts whisper by.

It is the miller's daughter,
 And she is grown so dear, so dear,
 That I would be the jewel
 That trembles in her ear:
 For hid in ringlets day and night,
 I'd touch her neck so warm and white.

And I would be the girdle
 About her dainty dainty waist,
 And her heart would beat against me,
 In sorrow and in rest:
 And I should know if it beat right,
 I'd clasp it round so close and tight.

And I would be the necklace,
 And all day long to fall and rise
 Upon her balmy bosom,
 With her laughter or her sighs,
 And I would lie so light, so light,
 I scarce should be unclasp'd at night.

A trifle, sweet! which true love spells—
 True love interprets—right alone.
 His light upon the letter dwells,
 For all the spirit is his own.
 So, if I waste words now, in truth
 You must blame Love. His early rage
 Had force to make me rhyme in youth,
 And makes me talk too much in age.

And now those vivid hours are gone,
 Like mine own life to me thou art,
 Where Past and Present, wound in one,
 Do make a garland for the heart:

So sing that other song I made,
 Half-anger'd with my happy lot,
 The day, when in the chestnut shade
 I found the blue Forget-me-not.

Love that hath us in the net,
 Can he pass, and we forget?
 Many suns arise and set.
 Many a chance the years beget.
 Love the gift is Love the debt.

Even so.

Love is hurt with jar and fret.
 Love is made a vague regret.
 Eyes with idle tears are wet.
 Idle habit links us yet.
 What is love? for we forget:

Ah, no! no!

Look thro' mine eyes with thine. True
 wife,

Round my true heart thine arms entwine
 My other dearer life in life,

Look thro' my very soul with thine!
 Untouch'd with any shade of years,

May those kind eyes for ever dwell!
 They have not shed a many tears,
 Dear eyes, since first I knew them
 well.

Yet tears they shed: they had their part

Of sorrow: for when time was ripe,
 The still affection of the heart
 Became an outward breathing type,
 That into stillness past again,
 And left a want unknown before;
 Although the loss had brought us pain,
 That loss but made us love the more,

With farther lookings on. The kiss,
 The woven arms, seem but to be
 Weak symbols of the settled bliss,
 The comfort, I have found in thee:
 But that God bless thee, dear—who
 wrought

Two spirits to one equal mind—
 With blessings beyond hope or thought,
 With blessings which no words can find.

Arise, and let us wander forth,
 To yon old mill across the wolds;
 For look, the sunset, south and north,
 Winds all the vale in rosy folds,

And fires your narrow casement glass,
 Touching the sullen pool below:
 On the chalk-hill the bearded grass
 Is dry and dewless. Let us go.

FATIMA

O LOVE, Love, Love! O withering might!
 O sun, that from thy noonday height
 Shudderest when I strain my sight,
 Throbbing thro' all thy heat and light,
 Lo, falling from my constant mind,
 Lo, parch'd and wither'd, deaf and blind,
 I whirl like leaves in roaring wind.

Last night I wasted hateful hours
 Below the city's eastern towers:
 I thirsted for the brooks, the showers:
 I roll'd among the tender flowers:
 I crush'd them on my breast, my mouth;
 I look'd athwart the burning drouth
 Of that long desert to the south.

Last night, when some one spoke his
 name,
 From my swift blood that went and came
 A thousand little shafts of flame
 Were shiver'd in my narrow frame.
 O Love, O fire! once he drew
 With one long kiss my whole soul thro'
 My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew.

Before he mounts the hill, I know
 He cometh quickly: from below
 Sweet gales, as from deep gardens, blow
 Before him, striking on my brow.
 In my dry brain my spirit soon,
 Down-deepening from swoon to swoon,
 Faints like a dazzled morning moon.

The wind sounds like a silver wire,
 And from beyond the noon a fire
 Is pour'd upon the hills, and nigher
 The skies stoop down in their desire;
 And, isled in sudden seas of light,
 My heart, pierced thro' with fierce
 delight,
 Bursts into blossom in his sight.

My whole soul waiting silently,
 All naked in a sultry sky,

Droops blinded with his shining eye :
 I *will* possess him or will die.
 I will grow round him in his place,
 Grow, live, die looking on his face,
 Die, dying clasp'd in his embrace.

CENONE

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
 The swimming vapour slopes athwart the
 glen,
 Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine
 to pine,
 And loiters, slowly drawn. On either
 hand
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway
 down
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them
 roars
 The long brook falling thro' the clov'n
 ravine
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.
 Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
 Stands up and takes the morning: but in
 front
 The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
 Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
 The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
 Mournful Cēnone, wandering forlorn
 Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
 Her cheek had lost the rose, and round
 her neck
 Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
 She, leaning on a fragment twined with
 vine,
 Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-
 shade
 Sloped downward to her seat from the
 upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
 The grasshopper is silent in the grass:
 The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
 Rests like a shadow, and the winds are
 dead.
 The purple flower droops: the golden bee

Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
 My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
 My heart is breaking, and my eyes are
 dim,
 And I am all aweary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O
 Caves
 That house the cold crown'd snake! O
 mountain brooks,
 I am the daughter of a River-God,
 Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
 My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
 Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
 A cloud that gather'd shape: for it may be
 That, while I speak of it, a little while
 My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 I waited underneath the dawning hills,
 Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy dark,
 And dewy dark aloft the mountain pine:
 Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
 Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd,
 white-hooved,
 Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft:
 Far up the solitary morning smote
 The streaks of virgin snow. With down-
 dropt eyes
 I sat alone: white-breasted like a star
 Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard
 skin
 Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny
 hair
 Cluster'd about his temples like a God's:
 And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow
 brightens
 When the wind blows the foam, and all
 my heart
 Went forth to embrace him coming ere
 he came.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 He smiled, and opening out his milk-
 white palm

Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of
speech

Came down upon my heart.

“My own Ænone,
Beautiful-brow'd Ænone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind
ingrav'n

‘For the most fair,’ would seem to award
it thine,

As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married
brows.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added “This was cast upon the
board,
When all the full-faced presence of the
Gods

Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom
’twere due :

But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the
cave

Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of
Gods.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnoon: one silvery
cloud

Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower
they came,

Naked they came to that smooth-swarded
bower,

And at their feet the crocus brake like
fire,

Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and
vine,

This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro’
and thro’.

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
And o’er him flow’d a golden cloud, and
lean’d

Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her, to
whom

Coming thro’ Heaven, like a light that
grows

Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestion’d, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, “from
many a vale

And river-sunder’d champaign clothed
with corn,

Or labour’d mine undrainable of ore.
Honour,” she said, “and homage, tax
and toll,

From many an inland town and haven
large,

Mast-throng’d beneath her shadowing
citadel

In glassy bays among her tallest towers.”

‘O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of
power,

“Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neigh-
bour crowns

Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon
from me,

From me, Heaven’s Queen, Paris, to thee
king-born,

A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men,
in power

Only, are likest gods, who have attain’d
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
 Out at arm’s-length, so much the thought
 of power
 Flatter’d his spirit ; but Pallas where she
 stood
 Somewhat apart, her clear and bared
 limbs
 O’erthwarted with the brazen-headed
 spear
 Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
 The while, above, her full and earnest
 eye
 Over her snow-cold breast and angry
 cheek
 Kept watch, waiting decision, made
 reply.

“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-
 control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign
 power.
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncalled for) but to live by
 law,
 Acting the law we live by without fear ;
 And, because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.”

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Again she said : “I woo thee not with
 gifts.
 Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
 To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
 So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,
 If gazing on divinity disrobed
 Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
 Unbias’d by self-profit, oh ! rest thee sure
 That I shall love thee well and cleave to
 thee,
 So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
 Shall strike within thy pulses, like a
 God’s,
 To push thee forward thro’ a life of shocks,
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
 Sinew’d with action, and the full-grown
 will,
 Circled thro’ all experiences, pure law,
 Commensure perfect freedom.”

‘Here she ceas’d,
 And Paris ponder’d, and I cried, “O
 Paris,
 Give it to Pallas !” but he heard me not,
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me !

‘O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Italian Aphrodite beautiful,
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian
 wells,
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew
 From her warm brows and bosom her
 deep hair
 Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
 And shoulder : from the violets her light
 foot
 Shone rosy-white, and o’er her rounded
 form
 Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
 Floated the glowing sunlights, as she
 moved.

‘Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
 The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
 Half-whisper’d in his ear, “I promise
 thee
 The fairest and most loving wife in
 Greece,”
 She spoke and laugh’d : I shut my sight
 for fear :
 But when I look’d, Paris had raised his
 arm,
 And I beheld great Herè’s angry eyes,
 As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
 And I was left alone within the bower ;
 And from that time to this I am alone,
 And I shall be alone until I die.

‘Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Fairest—why fairest wife ? am I not fair ?
 My love hath told me so a thousand
 times.
 Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
 When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
 Eyed like the evening star, with playful
 tail
 Crouch’d fawning in the weed. Most
 loving is she ?

Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my
arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips
prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling
dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest
pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the
craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster’d the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the
dark morn
The panther’s roar came muffled, while
I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Ænone see the morning mist
Sweep thro’ them; never see them over-
laid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trem-
bling stars.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin’d folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the
glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with
her
The Abominable, that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleian banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak
my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and
men.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand
times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Ev’n on this hand, and sitting on this
stone?

Seal’d it with kisses? water’d it with
tears?

O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my
face?

O happy earth, how canst thou bear my
weight?

O death, death, death, thou ever-floating
cloud,

There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and
more,

Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the in-
most hills,

Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father’s eyes!

‘O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to
me

Walking the cold and starless road of
Death

Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and
go

Down into Troy, and ere the stars come
forth

Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.

What this may be I know not, but I
know

That, wheresoe’er I am by night and
day,

All earth and air seem only burning
fire.’

THE SISTERS

WE were two daughters of one race :

She was the fairest in the face :

The wind is blowing in turret and tree.

They were together, and she fell ;

Therefore revenge became me well.

O the Earl was fair to see !

She died : she went to burning flame :

She mix'd her ancient blood with shame.

The wind is howling in turret and tree.

Whole weeks and months, and early and late,

To win his love I lay in wait :

O the Earl was fair to see !

I made a feast ; I bad him come ;

I won his love, I brought him home.

The wind is roaring in turret and tree.

And after supper, on a bed,

Upon my lap he laid his head :

O the Earl was fair to see !

I kiss'd his eyelids into rest :

His ruddy cheek upon my breast.

The wind is raging in turret and tree.

I hated him with the hate of hell,

But I loved his beauty passing well.

O the Earl was fair to see !

I rose up in the silent night :

I made my dagger sharp and bright.

The wind is raving in turret and tree.

As half-asleep his breath he drew,

Three times I stabb'd him thro' and thro'.

O the Earl was fair to see !

I curl'd and comb'd his comely head,

He look'd so grand when he was dead.

The wind is blowing in turret and tree.

I wrapt his body in the sheet,

And laid him at his mother's feet.

O the Earl was fair to see !

TO —

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM

I SEND you here a sort of allegory,
(For you will understand it) of a soul,

A sinful soul possess'd of many gifts,
A spacious garden full of flowering weeds,
A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,
That did love Beauty only, (Beauty seen
In all varieties of mould and mind)

And Knowledge for its beauty ; or if
Good,

Good only for its beauty, seeing not
That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge, are
three sisters

That doat upon each other, friends to
man,

Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sunder'd without tears.
And he that shuts Love out, in turn shall
be

Shut out from Love, and on her threshold
lie

Howling in outer darkness. Not for this
Was common clay ta'en from the common
earth

Moulded by God, and temper'd with the
tears

Of angels to the perfect shape of man.

THE PALACE OF ART

I BUILT my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.

I said, 'O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well.'

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnish'd
brass

I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
From level meadow-bases of deep grass
Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or
shelf

The rock rose clear, or winding stair.
My soul would live alone unto herself
In her high palace there.

And 'while the world runs round and
round,' I said,

'Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his stedfast
shade

Sleeps on his luminous ring.'

To which my soul made answer readily :
 'Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
 In this great mansion, that is built for me,
 So royal-rich and wide.'

* * * *
 * * * *

Four courts I made, East, West and
 South and North,

In each a squared lawn, wherefrom
 The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth
 A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there
 ran a row

Of cloisters, branch'd like mighty woods,
 Echoing all night to that sonorous flow
 Of spouted fountain-floods.

And round the roofs a gilded gallery
 That lent broad verge to distant lands,
 Far as the wild swan wings, to where the
 sky
 Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one
 swell

Across the mountain stream'd below
 In misty folds, that floating as they fell
 Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seem'd
 To hang on tiptoe, tossing up
 A cloud of incense of all odour steam'd
 From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, 'And who shall
 gaze upon
 My palace with unblinded eyes,
 While this great bow will waver in the sun,
 And that sweet incense rise?'

For that sweet incense rose and never
 fail'd,

And, while day sank or mounted higher,
 The light aerial gallery, golden-rail'd,
 Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stain'd
 and traced,

Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires
 From shadow'd grots of arches interlaced,
 And tipt with frost-like spires.

* * * *
 * * * *

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
 That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
 Thro' which the livelong day my soul
 did pass,
 Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace
 stood,

All various, each a perfect whole
 From living Nature, fit for every mood
 And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green
 and blue,

Showing a gaudy summer-morn,
 Where with puff'd cheek the belted hunter
 blew
 His wreathed bugle-horn.

One seem'd all dark and red—a tract of
 sand,

And some one pacing there alone,
 Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
 Lit with a low large moon.

One show'd an iron coast and angry
 waves.

You seem'd to hear them climb and fall
 And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing
 caves,
 Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
 By herds upon an endless plain,
 The ragged rims of thunder brooding
 low,
 With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
 In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
 Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,
 And hoary to the wind.

And one a foreground black with stones
 and slags,

Beyond, a line of heights, and higher
 All barr'd with long white cloud the
 scornful crags,
 And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight pour'd

On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
As fit for every mood of mind,
Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there

Not less than truth design'd.

* * * *
* * * *

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx
Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;
An angel look'd at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise
A group of Houri's bow'd to see
The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes
That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
In some fair space of sloping greens
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
And watch'd by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,
To list a foot-fall, ere he saw
The wood-nymph, stay'd the Ausonian
king to hear
Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrail'd,
And many a tract of palm and rice,
The throne of Indian Cama slowly sail'd
A summer fann'd with spice.

Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,
From off her shoulder backward borne:
From one hand droop'd a crocus: one
hand grasp'd
The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flush'd Ganymede, his rosy thigh
Half-buried in the Eagle's down,
Sole as a flying star shot thro' the sky
Above the pillar'd town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair
Which the supreme Caucasian mind
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
Not less than life, design'd.

* * * *
* * * *

Then in the towers I placed great bells
that swung,
Moved of themselves, with silver sound;
And with choice paintings of wise men I
hung
The royal dais round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakespeare bland and
mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd
his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set
Many an arch high up did lift,
And angels rising and descending met
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely plann'd
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and
stings;
Here play'd, a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or
bind
All force in bonds that might endure,
And here once more like some sick man
declined,
And trusted any cure.

But over these she trod : and those great
bells

Began to chime. She took her throne :
She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,
To sing her songs alone.

And thro' the topmost Oriels' coloured
flame

Two godlike faces gazed below ;
Plato the wise, and large-brow'd Verulam,
The first of those who know.

And all those names, that in their motion
were

Full-welling fountain-heads of change,
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazon'd
fair

In diverse raiment strange :

Thro' which the lights, rose, amber,
emerald, blue,

Flush'd in her temples and her eyes,
And from her lips, as morn from Memnon,
drew

Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong

Her low preamble all alone,
More than my soul to hear her echo'd
song

Throb thro' the ribbed stone ;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful
mirth,

Joying to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible
earth,

Lord of the senses five ;

Communing with herself : 'All these are
mine,

And let the world have peace or wars,
'Tis one to me.' She—when young night
divine

Crown'd dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—

Lit light in wreaths and anadems,

And pure quintessences of precious oils

In hollow'd moons of gems,

To mimic heaven ; and clapt her hands
and cried,

'I marvel if my still delight
In this great house so royal-rich, and wide,
Be flatter'd to the height.

'O all things fair to sate my various eyes !
O shapes and hues that please me well !
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell !

'O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves
of swine
That range on yonder plain.

'In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and
sleep ;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep.'

Then of the moral instinct would she prate
And of the rising from the dead,
As hers by right of full-accomplish'd Fate ;
And at the last she said :

'I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all.'

* * * *
* * * *

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flash'd thro' her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn
mirth,
And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prosper'd : so
three years

She prosper'd : on the fourth she fell,
Like Herod, when the shout was in his
ears,
Struck thro' with pangs of hell.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of Personality,
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she
turn'd her sight

The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote, 'Mene, mene,' and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was
born

Scorn of herself; again, from out that
mood

Laughter at her self-scorn.

'What ! is not this my place of strength,'
she said,

'My spacious mansion built for me,
Whereof the strong foundation-stones
were laid

Since my first memory ?'

But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes ; and unawares
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears
of blood,

And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of
flame,

And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at noon she
came,

That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
Or power of movement, seem'd my
soul,

'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
Making for one sure goal.

A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of
sand,

Left on the shore ; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from
the land

Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance
Join'd not, but stood, and standing saw
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
Roll'd round by one fix'd law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had
curl'd.

'No voice,' she shriek'd in that lone
hall,

'No voice breaks thro' the stillness of
this world :

One deep, deep silence all !'

She, mouldering with the dull earth's
mouldering sod,

Inwrought tenfold in slothful shame,
Lay there exiled from eternal God,

Lost to her place and name ;

And death and life she hated equally,

And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,

No comfort anywhere ;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,

And ever worse with growing time,
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,

And all alone in crime :

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
With blackness as a solid wall,

Far off she seem'd to hear the dully sound
Of human footsteps fall.

As in strange lands a traveller walking
slow,

In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moon-rise hears the low
Moan of an unknown sea ;

And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound
Of rocks thrown down, or one deep
cry

Of great wild beasts ; then thinketh, 'I
have found

A new land, but I die.'

She howl'd aloud, 'I am on fire within.
There comes no murmur of reply.

What is it that will take away my sin,
And save me lest I die ?'

So when four years were wholly finished,
She threw her royal robes away.

'Make me a cottage in the vale,' she said,
'Where I may mourn and pray.

'Yet pull not down my palace towers,
that are
So lightly, beautifully built :
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt.'

LADY CLARA VERE DE VERE

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
Of me you shall not win renown :
You thought to break a country heart
For pastime, ere you went to town.
At me you smiled, but unbeguiled
I saw the snare, and I retired :
The daughter of a hundred Earls,
You are not one to be desired.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
I know you proud to bear your name,
Your pride is yet no mate for mine,
Too proud to care from whence I came.
Nor would I break for your sweet sake
A heart that doats on truer charms.
A simple maiden in her flower
Is worth a hundred coats-of-arms.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
Some meeker pupil you must find,
For were you queen of all that is,
I could not stoop to such a mind.
You sought to prove how I could love,
And my disdain is my reply.
The lion on your old stone gates
Is not more cold to you than I.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
You put strange memories in my head.
Not thrice your branching limes have
blown
Since I beheld young Laurence dead.
Oh your sweet eyes, your low replies :
A great enchantress you may be ;
But there was that across his throat
Which you had hardly cared to see.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
When thus he met his mother's view,
She had the passions of her kind,
She spake some certain truths of you.
Indeed I heard one bitter word
That scarce is fit for you to hear ;
Her manners had not that repose
Which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
There stands a spectre in your hall :
The guilt of blood is at your door :
You changed a wholesome heart to gall.
You held your course without remorse,
To make him trust his modest worth,
And, last, you fix'd a vacant stare,
And slew him with your noble birth.

Trust me, Clara Vere de Vere,
From yon blue heavens above us bent
The gardener Adam and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent.
Howe'er it be, it seems to me,
'Tis only noble to be good.
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.

I know you, Clara Vere de Vere,
You pine among your halls and towers :
The languid light of your proud eyes
Is wearied of the rolling hours.
In glowing health, with boundless wealth,
But sickening of a vague disease,
You know so ill to deal with time,
You needs must play such pranks as
these.

Clara, Clara Vere de Vere,
If time be heavy on your hands,
Are there no beggars at your gate,
Nor any poor about your lands ?
Oh ! teach the orphan-boy to read,
Or teach the orphan-girl to sew,
Pray Heaven for a human heart,
And let the foolish yeoman go.

THE MAY QUEEN

You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear ;
To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad New-year ;
Of all the glad New-year, mother, the maddest merriest day ;
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

There's many a black black eye, they say, but none so bright as mine ;
There's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caroline :
But none so fair as little Alice in all the land they say,
So I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

I sleep so sound all night, mother, that I shall never wake,
If you do not call me loud when the day begins to break :
But I must gather knots of flowers, and buds and garlands gay,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

As I came up the valley whom think ye should I see,
But Robin leaning on the bridge beneath the hazel-tree ?
He thought of that sharp look, mother, I gave him yesterday,
But I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

He thought I was a ghost, mother, for I was all in white,
And I ran by him without speaking, like a flash of light.
They call me cruel-hearted, but I care not what they say,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

They say he's dying all for love, but that can never be :
They say his heart is breaking, mother—what is that to me ?
There's many a bolder lad 'ill woo me any summer day,
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

Little Effie shall go with me to-morrow to the green,
And you'll be there, too, mother, to see me made the Queen ;
For the shepherd lads on every side 'ill come from far away,
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The honeysuckle round the porch has wov'n its wavy bowers,
And by the meadow-trenches blow the faint sweet cuckoo-flowers ;
And the wild marsh-marigold shines like fire in swamps and hollows gray,
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

The night-winds come and go, mother, upon the meadow-grass,
And the happy stars above them seem to brighten as they pass ;
There will not be a drop of rain the whole of the livelong day,
And I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

All the valley, mother, 'ill be fresh and green and still,
And the cowslip and the crowfoot are over all the hill,
And the rivulet in the flowery dale 'ill merrily glance and play,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

So you must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear,
To-morrow 'ill be the happiest time of all the glad New-year :
To-morrow 'ill be of all the year the maddest merriest day,
For I'm to be Queen o' the May, mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May.

NEW-YEAR'S EVE

IF you're waking call me early, call me early, mother dear,
For I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year.
It is the last New-year that I shall ever see,
Then you may lay me low i' the mould and think no more of me.

To-night I saw the sun set : he set and left behind
The good old year, the dear old time, and all my peace of mind ;
And the New-year's coming up, mother, but I shall never see
The blossom on the blackthorn, the leaf upon the tree.

Last May we made a crown of flowers : we had a merry day ;
Beneath the hawthorn on the green they made me Queen of May ;
And we danced about the may-pole and in the hazel copse,
Till Charles's Wain came out above the tall white chimney-tops.

There's not a flower on all the hills : the frost is on the pane :
I only wish to live till the snowdrops come again :
I wish the snow would melt and the sun come out on high :
I long to see a flower so before the day I die.

The building rook 'll caw from the windy tall elm-tree,
And the tufted plover pipe along the fallow lea,
And the swallow 'ill come back again with summer o'er the wave,
But I shall lie alone, mother, within the mouldering grave.

Upon the chancel-casement, and upon that grave of mine,
In the early early morning the summer sun 'ill shine,
Before the red cock crows from the farm upon the hill,
When you are warm-asleep, mother, and all the world is still.

When the flowers come again, mother, beneath the waning light
You'll never see me more in the long gray fields at night ;
When from the dry dark wold the summer airs blow cool
On the oat-grass and the sword-grass, and the bulrush in the pool.

You'll bury me, my mother, just beneath the hawthorn shade,
And you'll come sometimes and see me where I am lowly laid.
I shall not forget you, mother, I shall hear you when you pass,
With your feet above my head in the long and pleasant grass.

I have been wild and wayward, but you'll forgive me now ;
You'll kiss me, my own mother, and forgive me ere I go ;

Nay, nay, you must not weep, nor let your grief be wild,
You should not fret for me, mother, you have another child.

If I can I'll come again, mother, from out my resting-place ;
Tho' you'll not see me, mother, I shall look upon your face ;
Tho' I cannot speak a word, I shall harken what you say,
And be often, often with you when you think I'm far away.

Goodnight, goodnight, when I have said goodnight for evermore,
And you see me carried out from the threshold of the door ;
Don't let Effie come to see me till my grave be growing green :
She'll be a better child to you than ever I have been.

She'll find my garden-tools upon the granary floor :
Let her take 'em : they are hers : I shall never garden more :
But tell her, when I'm gone, to train the rosebush that I set
About the parlour-window and the box of mignonette.

Goodnight, sweet mother : call me before the day is born.
All night I lie awake, but I fall asleep at morn ;
But I would see the sun rise upon the glad New-year,
So, if you're waking, call me, call me early, mother dear.

CONCLUSION

I THOUGHT to pass away before, and yet alive I am ;
And in the fields all round I hear the bleating of the lamb.
How sadly, I remember, rose the morning of the year !
To die before the snowdrop came, and now the violet's here.

O sweet is the new violet, that comes beneath the skies,
And sweeter is the young lamb's voice to me that cannot rise,
And sweet is all the land about, and all the flowers that blow,
And sweeter far is death than life to me that long to go.

It seem'd so hard at first, mother, to leave the blessed sun,
And now it seems as hard to stay, and yet His will be done !
But still I think it can't be long before I find release ;
And that good man, the clergyman, has told me words of peace.

O blessings on his kindly voice and on his silver hair !
And blessings on his whole life long, until he meet me there !
O blessings on his kindly heart and on his silver head !
A thousand times I blest him, as he knelt beside my bed.

He taught me all the mercy, for he show'd me all the sin.
Now, tho' my lamp was lighted late, there's One will let me in :
Nor would I now be well, mother, again if that could be,
For my desire is but to pass to Him that died for me.

I did not hear the dog howl, mother, or the death-watch beat,
There came a sweeter token when the night and morning meet :
But sit beside my bed, mother, and put your hand in mine,
And Effie on the other side, and I will tell the sign.

All in the wild March-morning I heard the angels call ;
It was when the moon was setting, and the dark was over all ;
The trees began to whisper, and the wind began to roll,
And in the wild March-morning I heard them call my soul.

For lying broad awake I thought of you and Effie dear ;
I saw you sitting in the house, and I no longer here ;
With all my strength I pray'd for both, and so I felt resign'd,
And up the valley came a swell of music on the wind.

I thought that it was fancy, and I listen'd in my bed,
And then did something speak to me—I know not what was said ;
For great delight and shuddering took hold of all my mind,
And up the valley came again the music on the wind.

But you were sleeping ; and I said, 'It's not for them : it's mine.'
And if it come three times, I thought, I take it for a sign.
And once again it came, and close beside the window-bars,
Then seem'd to go right up to Heaven and die among the stars.

So now I think my time is near. I trust it is. I know
The blessed music went that way my soul will have to go.
And for myself, indeed, I care not if I go to-day.
But, Effie, you must comfort *her* when I am past away.

And say to Robin a kind word, and tell him not to fret ;
There's many a worthier than I, would make him happy yet.
If I had lived—I cannot tell—I might have been his wife ;
But all these things have ceased to be, with my desire of life.

O look ! the sun begins to rise, the heavens are in a glow ;
He shines upon a hundred fields, and all of them I know.
And there I move no longer now, and there his light may shine—
Wild flowers in the valley for other hands than mine.

O sweet and strange it seems to me, that ere this day is done
The voice, that now is speaking, may be beyond the sun—
For ever and for ever with those just souls and true—
And what is life, that we should moan ? why make we such ado ?

For ever and for ever, all in a blessed home—
And there to wait a little while till you and Effie come—
To lie within the light of God, as I lie upon your breast—
And the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

THE LOTOS-EATERS

'COURAGE !' he said, and pointed toward
the land,

'This mounting wave will roll us shore-
ward soon.'

In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.

All round the coast the languid air did
swoon,

Breathing like one that hath a weary
dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the
moon ;

And like a downward smoke, the slender
stream

Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall
did seem.

A land of streams ! some, like a down-
ward smoke,

Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did
go ;

And some thro' wavering lights and
shadows broke,

Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward
flow

From the inner land : far off, three
mountain-tops,

Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd : and, dew'd with
showery drops,

Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the
woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West : thro' mountain clefts
the dale

Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding
vale

And meadow, set with slender galingale ;
A land where all things always seem'd
the same !

And round about the keel with faces
pale,

Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters
came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted
stem,

Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they
gave

To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the
grave ;

And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart
did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow
sand,

Between the sun and moon upon the
shore ;

And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave ; but ever-
more

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the
oar,

Weary the wandering fields of barren
foam.

Then some one said, 'We will return no
more ;'

And all at once they sang, 'Our island
home

Is far beyond the wave ; we will no longer
roam.'

CHORIC SONG

I

THERE is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between
walls

Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes ;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from
the blissful skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers
weep,

And from the craggy ledge the poppy
hangs in sleep. "

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from
weariness?

All things have rest : why should we toil
alone,

We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown :
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy
balm ;

Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
'There is no joy but calm !'
Why should we only toil, the roof and
crown of things ?

III

Lo ! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed ; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo ! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no
toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life ; ah, why
Should life all labour be ?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last ?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we
have
To war with evil ? Is there any peace

In ever climbing up the climbing wave ?
All things have rest, and ripen toward
the grave

In silence ; ripen, fall and cease :
Give us long rest or death, dark death,
or dreamful ease.

V

How sweet it were, hearing the down-
ward stream,

With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream !
To dream and dream, like yonder amber
light,

Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on
the height ;

To hear each other's whisper'd speech ;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the
beach,

And tender curving lines of creamy spray ;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melan-
choly ;

To muse and brood and live again in
memory,

With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an
urn of brass !

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears : but all hath
suffer'd change :

For surely now our household hearths are
cold :

Our sons inherit us : our looks are
strange :

And we should come like ghosts to trouble
joy.

Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel
sings

Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten
things.

Is there confusion in the little isle ?
Let what is broken so remain.

The Gods are hard to reconcile :
 'Tis hard to settle order once again.
 There *is* confusion worse than death,
 Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
 Long labour unto aged breath,
 Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
 And eyes grown dim with gazing on the
 pilot-stars.

VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
 How sweet (while warm airs lull us,
 blowing lowly)
 With half-dropt eyelid still,
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing
 slowly
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined
 vine—
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water
 falling
 Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath
 divine !
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling
 brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out
 beneath the pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak :
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek :
 All day the wind breathes low with
 mellower tone :
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the
 yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
 We have had enough of action, and of
 motion we,
 Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard,
 when the surge was seething free,
 Where the wallowing monster spouted
 his foam-fountains in the sea.
 Let us swear an oath, and keep it with
 an equal mind,
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie
 reclined
 On the hills like Gods together, careless
 of mankind.

For they lie beside their nectar, and the
 bolts are hurl'd
 Far below them in the valleys, and the
 clouds are lightly curl'd
 Round their golden houses, girdled with
 the gleaming world :
 Where they smile in secret, looking over
 wasted lands,
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake,
 roaring deeps and fiery sands,
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and
 sinking ships, and praying hands.
 But they smile, they find a music centred
 in a doleful song
 Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient
 tale of wrong,
 Like a tale of little meaning tho' the
 words are strong ;
 Chanted from an ill-used race of men
 that cleave the soil,
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with
 enduring toil,
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and
 wine and oil ;
 Till they perish and they suffer—some,
 'tis whisper'd—down in hell
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian
 valleys dwell,
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of
 asphodel.
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet
 than toil, the shore
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind
 and wave and oar ;
 Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will
 not wander more.

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

I READ, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
 ' *The Legend of Good Women*, ' long ago
 Sung by the morning star of song, who
 made

His music heard below ;

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose
 sweet breath

Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
 The spacious times of great Elizabeth
 With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his
art

Held me above the subject, as strong
gales

Hold swollen clouds from raining, tho'
my heart,

Brimful of those wild tales,

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In
every land

I saw, wherever light illumineth,
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand
The downward slope to death.

Those far-renowned brides of ancient
song

Peopled the hollow dark, like burning
stars,

And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and
wrong,

And trumpets blown for wars ;

And clattering flints batter'd with clanging
hoofs ;

And I saw crowds in column'd sanctu-
aries ;

And forms that pass'd at windows and on
roofs

Of marble palaces ;

Corpses across the threshold ; heroes tall
Dislodging pinnacle and parapet

Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall ;
Lances in ambush set ;

And high shrine-doors burst thro' with
heated blasts

That run before the fluttering tongues
of fire ;

White surf wind-scatter'd over sails and
masts,

And ever climbing higher ;

Squadrons and squares of men in brazen
plates,

Scaffolds, still sheets of water, divers
woes,

Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron
grates,

And hush'd seraglios.

So shape chased shape as swift as, when
to land

Bluster the winds and tides the self-same
way,

Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level
sand,

Torn from the fringe of spray.

I started once, or seem'd to start in pain,
Resolved on noble things, and strove
to speak,

As when a great thought strikes along
the brain,

And flushes all the cheek.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down
A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,

That bore a lady from a leaguer'd town ;
And then, I know not how,

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing
thought

Stream'd onward, lost their edges, and
did creep

Roll'd on each other, rounded, smooth'd,
and brought

Into the gulfs of sleep.

At last methought that I had wander'd far
In an old wood : fresh-wash'd in coolest
dew

The maidens splendours of the morning star
Shook in the stedfast blue.

Enormous elm-tree-boles did stoop and
lean

Upon the dusky brushwood underneath
Their broad curved branches, fledged with
clearest green,

New from its silken sheath.

The dim red morn had died, her journey
done,

And with dead lips smiled at the twi-
light plain,

Half-fall'n across the threshold of the sun,
Never to rise again.

There was no motion in the dumb dead air,
Not any song of bird or sound of rill ;

Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre
Is not so deadly still

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine
turn'd

Their humid arms festooning tree to
tree,

And at the root thro' lush green grasses
burn'd

The red anemone.

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I
knew

The tearful glimmer of the languid dawn
On those long, rank, dark wood-walks
drench'd in dew,

Leading from lawn to lawn.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,
Pour'd back into my empty soul and
frame

The times when I remember to have been
Joyful and free from blame.

And from within me a clear under-tone
Thrill'd thro' mine ears in that unbliss-
ful clime,

'Pass freely thro' : the wood is all thine
own,

Until the end of time.'

At length I saw a lady within call,
Stillter than chisell'd marble, standing
there ;

A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
And most divinely fair.

Her loveliness with shame and with sur-
prise

Froze my swift speech : she turning on
my face

The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,
Spoke slowly in her place.

'I had great beauty : ask thou not my
name :

No one can be more wise than destiny.
Many drew swords and died. Where'er
I came

I brought calamity.'

'No marvel, sovereign lady : in fair field
Myself for such a face had boldly died,'
I answer'd free ; and turning I appeal'd
To one that stood beside.

But she, with sick and scornful looks averse,
To her full height her stately stature
draws ;

'My youth,' she said, 'was blasted with
a curse :

This woman was the cause.

'I was cut off from hope in that sad place,
Which men call'd Aulis in those iron
years :

My father held his hand upon his face ;
I, blinded with my tears,

'Still strove to speak : my voice was
thick with sighs

As in a dream. Dimly I could descry
The stern black-bearded kings with wolf-
ish eyes,

Waiting to see me die.

'The high masts flicker'd as they lay afloat ;
The crowds, the temples, waver'd, and
the shore ;

The bright death quiver'd at the victim's
throat ;

Touch'd ; and I knew no more.'

Whereto the other with a downward brow :
'I would the white cold heavy-plung-
ing foam,

Whirl'd by the wind, had roll'd me deep
below,

Then when I left my home.'

Her slow full words sank thro' the silence
drear,

As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea :
Sudden I heard a voice that cried, 'Come
here,

That I may look on thee.'

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,
One sitting on a crimson scarf unroll'd ;
A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold

black eyes,
Brow-bound with burning gold.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began :
'I govern'd men by change, and so I
sway'd

All moods. 'Tis long since I have seen
a man.

Once, like the moon, I made

'The ever-shifting currents of the blood
According to my humour ebb and flow.
I have no men to govern in this wood :
That makes my only woe.

'Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not
bend
One will ; nor tame and tutor with
mine eye
That dull cold-blooded Cæsar. Prythee,
friend,
Where is Mark Antony?

'The man, my lover, with whom I rode
sublime
On Fortune's neck : we sat as God by
God :
The Nilus would have risen before his time
And flooded at our nod.

'We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep,
and lit
Lamps which out-burn'd Canopus. O
my life
In Egypt ! O the dalliance and the wit,
The flattery and the strife,

'And the wild kiss, when fresh from war's
alarms,
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,
My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,
Contented there to die !

'And there he died : and when I heard
my name
Sigh'd forth with life I would not brook
my fear
Of the other : with a worm I balk'd his
fame.
What else was left ? look here !'

(With that she tore her robe apart, and half
The polish'd argent of her breast to
sight
Laid bare. Thereto she pointed with a
laugh,
Showing the aspick's bite.)

'I died a Queen. The Roman soldier
found
Me lying dead, my crown about my
brows,

A name for ever !—lying robed and
crown'd,
Worthy a Roman spouse.'

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range
Struck by all passion, did fall down
and glance
From tone to tone, and glided thro' all
change
Of liveliest utterance.

When she made pause I knew not for
delight ;
Because with sudden motion from the
ground
She raised her piercing orbs, and fill'd with
light
The interval of sound.

Still with their fires Love tipt his keenest
darts ;
As once they drew into two burning rings
All beams of Love, melting the mighty
hearts
Of captains and of kings.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard
A noise of some one coming thro' the
lawn,
And singing clearer than the crested bird
That claps his wings at dawn.

'The torrent brooks of hallow'd Israel
From craggy hollows pouring, late and
soon,
Sound all night long, in falling thro' the
dell,
Far-heard beneath the moon.

'The balmy moon of blessed Israel
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with
beams divine :
All night the splinter'd crags that wall
the dell
With spires of silver shine.'

As one that museth where broad sunshine
laves
The lawn by some cathedral, thro' the
door
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves
Of sound on roof and floor

Within, and anthem sung, is charm'd and tied

To where he stands,—so stood I, when
that flow

Of music left the lips of her that died
To save her father's vow ;

The daughter of the warrior Gileadite,
A maiden pure ; as when she went
along

From Mizpeh's tower'd gate with welcome
light,

With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth : ' Heaven heads
the count of crimes

With that wild oath.' She render'd
answer high :

' Not so, nor once alone ; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

' Single I grew, like some green plant,
whose root

Creeps to the garden water-pipes be-
neath,

Feeding the flower ; but ere my flower
to fruit

Changed, I was ripe for death.

' My God, my land, my father—these did
move

Me from my bliss of life, that Nature
gave,

Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of
love

Down to a silent grave.

' And I went mourning, " No fair Hebrew
boy

Shall smile away my maiden blame
among

The Hebrew mothers"—emptied of all
joy,

Leaving the dance and song,

' Leaving the olive-gardens far below,

Leaving the promise of my bridal
bower,

The valleys of grape-loaded vines that
glow

Beneath the battled tower.

' The light white cloud swam over us.
Anon

We heard the lion roaring from his den ;
We saw the large white stars rise one by
one,

Or, from the darken'd glen,

' Saw God divide the night with flying
flame,

And thunder on the everlasting hills.

I heard Him, for He spake, and grief
became

A solemn scorn of ills.

' When the next moon was roll'd into
the sky,

Strength came to me that equall'd my
desire.

How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire !

' It comforts me in this one thought to
dwell,

That I subdued me to my father's will ;
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,
Sweetens the spirit still.

' Moreover it is written that my race
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from
Aroer

On Arnon unto Minneth.' Here her face
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She lock'd her lips : she left me where I
stood :

' Glory to God,' she sang, and past
afar,

Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,
Toward the morning-star.

Losing her carol I stood pensively,

As one that from a casement leans his
head,

When midnight bells cease ringing sud-
denly,

And the old year is dead.

' Alas ! alas !' a low voice, full of care,
Murmur'd beside me : ' Turn and look
on me :

I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,
If what I was I be.

'Would I had been some maiden coarse
and poor !

O me, that I should ever see the light !
Those dragon eyes of anger'd Eleanor
Do hunt me, day and night.'

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope and
trust :

To whom the Egyptian : 'O, you
tamely died !

You should have clung to Fulvia's waist,
and thrust

The dagger thro' her side.'

With that sharp sound the white dawn's
creeping beams,

Stol'n to my brain, dissolved the mystery
Of folded sleep. The captain of my
dreams

Ruled in the eastern sky.

Morn broaden'd on the borders of the
dark,

Ere I saw her, who clasp'd in her last
trance

Her murder'd father's head, or Joan of
Arc,

A light of ancient France ;

Or her who knew that Love can vanquish
Death,

Who kneeling, with one arm about
her king,

Drew forth the poison with her balmy
breath,

Sweet as new buds in Spring.

No memory labours longer from the deep
Gold-mines of thought to lift the
hidden ore

That glimpses, moving up, than I from
sleep

To gather and tell o'er

Each little sound and sight. With what
dull pain

Compass'd, how eagerly I sought to
strike

Into that wondrous track of dreams
again !

But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been
blest,

Desiring what is mingled with past
years,

In yearnings that can never be exprest
By signs or groans or tears ;

Because all words, tho' cull'd with choicest
art,

Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart
Faints, faded by its heat.

THE BLACKBIRD

O BLACKBIRD ! sing me something well :
While all the neighbours shoot thee
round,

I keep smooth plats of fruitful ground,
Where thou may'st warble, eat and dwell.

The espaliers and the standards all
Are thine ; the range of lawn and
park :

The unnetted black-hearts ripen dark,
All thine, against the garden wall.

Yet, tho' I spared thee all the spring,
Thy sole delight is, sitting still,
With that gold dagger of thy bill
To fret the summer jenneting.

A golden bill ! the silver tongue,
Cold February loved, is dry :
Plenty corrupts the melody
That made thee famous once, when
young :

And in the sultry garden-squares,
Now thy flute-notes are changed to
coarse,

I hear thee not at all, or hoarse
As when a hawker hawks his wares.

Take warning ! he that will not sing
While yon sun prospers in the blue,
Shall sing for want, ere leaves are
new,
Caught in the frozen palms of Spring.

THE DEATH OF THE OLD YEAR

FULL knee-deep lies the winter snow,
And the winter winds are wearily sigh-
ing :

Toll ye the church-bell sad and slow,
And tread softly and speak low,
For the old year lies a-dying.

Old year, you must not die ;
You came to us so readily,
You lived with us so steadily,
Old year, you shall not die.

He lieth still : he doth not move :
He will not see the dawn of day.
He hath no other life above.
He gave me a friend, and a true true-love,
And the New-year will take 'em away.

Old year, you must not go ;
So long as you have been with us,
Such joy as you have seen with us,
Old year, you shall not go.

He froth'd his bumpers to the brim ;
A jollier year we shall not see.
But tho' his eyes are waxing dim,
And tho' his foes speak ill of him,
He was a friend to me.

Old year, you shall not die ;
We did so laugh and cry with you,
I've half a mind to die with you,
Old year, if you must die.

He was full of joke and jest,
But all his merry quips are o'er.
To see him die, across the waste
His son and heir doth ride post-haste,
But he'll be dead before.

Every one for his own.
The night is starry and cold, my
friend,
And the New-year blithe and bold,
my friend,
Comes up to take his own.

How hard he breathes ! over the snow
I heard just now the crowing cock.
The shadows flicker to and fro :
The cricket chirps : the light burns low :
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.

Shake hands, before you die.
Old year, we'll dearly rue for you :
What is it we can do for you ?
Speak out before you die.

His face is growing sharp and thin.
Alack ! our friend is gone.
Close up his eyes : tie up his chin :
Step from the corpse, and let him in
That standeth there alone,
And waiteth at the door.
There's a new foot on the floor, my
friend,
And a new face at the door, my
friend,
A new face at the door.

TO J. S.

THE wind, that beats the mountain, blows
More softly round the open wold,
And gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould.

And me this knowledge bolder made,
Or else I had not dared to flow
In these words toward you, and invade
Even with a verse your holy woe.

'Tis strange that those we lean on most,
Those in whose laps our limbs are
nursed,
Fall into shadow, soonest lost :
Those we love first are taken first.

God gives us love. Something to love
He lends us ; but, when love is grown
To ripeness, that on which it throve
Falls off, and love is left alone.

This is the curse of time. Alas !
In grief I am not all unlearn'd ;
Once thro' mine own doors Death did
pass ;
One went, who never hath return'd.

He will not smile—not speak to me
Once more. Two years his chair is
seen
Empty before us. That was he
Without whose life I had not been.

Your loss is rarer ; for this star
 Rose with you thro' a little arc
 Of heaven, nor having wander'd far
 Shot on the sudden into dark.

I knew your brother : his mute dust
 I honour and his living worth :
 A man more pure and bold and just
 Was never born into the earth.

I have not look'd upon you nigh,
 Since that dear soul hath fall'n asleep.
 Great Nature is more wise than I :
 I will not tell you not to weep.

And tho' mine own eyes fill with dew,
 Drawn from the spirit thro' the brain,
 I will not even preach to you,
 'Weep, weeping dulls the inward
 pain.'

Let Grief be her own mistress still.
 She loveth her own anguish deep
 More than much pleasure. Let her will
 Be done—to weep or not to weep.

I will not say, 'God's ordinance
 Of Death is blown in every wind ;'
 For that is not a common chance
 That takes away a noble mind.

His memory long will live alone
 In all our hearts, as mournful light
 That broods above the fallen sun,
 And dwells in heaven half the night.

Vain solace ! Memory standing near
 Cast down her eyes, and in her
 throat

Her voice seem'd distant, and a tear
 Dropt on the letters as I wrote.

I wrote I know not what. In truth,
 How *should* I soothe you anyway,
 Who miss the brother of your youth ?
 Yet something I did wish to say :

For he too was a friend to me :
 Both are my friends, and my true
 breast
 Bleedeth for both ; yet it may be
 That only silence suiteth best.

Words weaker than your grief would
 make
 Grief more. 'Twere better I should
 cease

Although myself could almost take
 The place of him that sleeps in
 peace.

Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace :
 Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul,
 While the stars burn, the moons increase,
 And the great ages onward roll.

Sleep till the end, true soul and sweet.
 Nothing comes to thee new or strange.
 Sleep full of rest from head to feet ;
 Lie still, dry dust, secure of change.

ON A MOURNER

I

NATURE, so far as in her lies,
 Imitates God, and turns her face
 To every land beneath the skies,
 Counts nothing that she meets with
 base,
 But lives and loves in every place ;

II

Fills out the homely quickset-screens,
 And makes the purple lilac ripe,
 Steps from her airy hill, and greens
 The swamp, where humm'd the drop-
 ping snipe,
 With moss and braided marish-pipe ;

III

And on thy heart a finger lays,
 Saying, 'Beat quicker, for the time
 Is pleasant, and the woods and ways
 Are pleasant, and the beech and lime
 Put forth and feel a gladder clime.'

IV

And murmurs of a deeper voice,
 Going before to some far shrine,
 Teach that sick heart the stronger choice,
 Till all thy life one way incline
 With one wide Will that closes thine.

V

And when the zoning eve has died
 Where yon dark valleys wind forlorn,
 Come Hope and Memory, spouse and
 bride,
 From out the borders of the morn,
 With that fair child betwixt them born.

VI

And when no mortal motion jars
 The blackness round the tombing sod,
 Thro' silence and the trembling stars
 Comes Faith from tracts no feet have
 trod,
 And Virtue, like a household god

VII

Promising empire ; such as those
 Once heard at dead of night to greet
 Troy's wandering prince, so that he rose
 With sacrifice, while all the fleet
 Had rest by stony hills of Crete.

YOU ask me, why, tho' ill at ease,
 Within this region I subsist,
 Whose spirits falter in the mist,
 And languish for the purple seas.

It is the land that freemen till,
 That sober-suited Freedom chose,
 The land, where girt with friends or
 foes

A man may speak the thing he will ;

A land of settled government,
 A land of just and old renown,
 Where Freedom slowly broadens
 down

From precedent to precedent :

Where faction seldom gathers head,
 But by degrees to fullness wrought,
 The strength of some diffusive thought
 Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute
 Opinion, and induce a time
 When single thought is civil crime,
 And individual freedom mute ;

Tho' Power should make from land to
 land

The name of Britain trebly great—
 Tho' every channel of the State
 Should fill and choke with golden sand—

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,
 Wild wind ! I seek a warmer sky,
 And I will see before I die
 The palms and temples of the South.

OF old sat Freedom on the heights,
 The thunders breaking at her feet :
 Above her shook the starry lights :
 She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,
 Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind,
 But fragments of her mighty voice
 Came rolling on the wind.

Then stopt she down thro' town and field
 To mingle with the human race,
 And part by part to men reveal'd
 The fullness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,
 From her isle-altar gazing down,
 Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
 And, King-like, wears the crown :

Her open eyes desire the truth.
 The wisdom of a thousand years
 Is in them. May perpetual youth
 Keep dry their light from tears ;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
 Make bright our days and light our
 dreams,
 Turning to scorn with lips divine
 The falsehood of extremes !

LOVE thou thy land, with love far-brought
 From out the storied Past, and used
 Within the Present, but transfused
 Thro' future time by power of thought.

True love turn'd round on fixed poles,
Love, that endures not sordid ends,
For English natures, freemen, friends,
Thy brothers and immortal souls.

But pamper not a hasty time,
Nor feed with crude imaginings
The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings
That every sophister can lime.

Deliver not the tasks of might
To weakness, neither hide the ray
From those, not blind, who wait for
day,
Tho' sitting girt with doubtful light.

Make knowledge circle with the winds ;
But let her herald, Reverence, fly
Before her to whatever sky
Bear seed of men and growth of minds.

Watch what main-currents draw the years :
Cut Prejudice against the grain :
But gentle words are always gain :
Regard the weakness of thy peers :

Nor toil for title, place, or touch
Of pension, neither count on praise :
It grows to guerdon after-days :
Nor deal in watch-words overmuch :

Not clinging to some ancient saw ;
Not master'd by some modern term ;
Not swift nor slow to change, but firm :
And in its season bring the law ;

That from Discussion's lip may fall
With Life, that, working strongly,
binds—
Set in all lights by many minds,
To close the interests of all.

For Nature also, cold and warm,
And moist and dry, devising long,
Thro' many agents making strong,
Matures the individual form.

Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease.
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free
To ingroove itself with that which flies,
And work, a joint of state, that plies
Its office, moved with sympathy.

A saying, hard to shape in act ;
For all the past of Time reveals
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,
Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.

Ev'n now we hear with inward strife
A motion toiling in the gloom—
The Spirit of the years to come
Yearning to mix himself with Life.

A slow-develop'd strength awaits
Completion in a painful school ;
Phantoms of other forms of rule,
New Majesties of mighty States—

The warders of the growing hour,
But vague in vapour, hard to mark ;
And round them sea and air are dark
With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join'd,
Is bodied forth the second whole.
Regard gradation, lest the soul
Of Discord race the rising wind ;

A wind to puff your idol-fires,
And heap their ashes on the head ;
To shame the boast so often made,
That we are wiser than our sires.

Oh yet, if Nature's evil star
Drive men in manhood, as in youth,
To follow flying steps of Truth
Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,
Must ever shock, like armed foes,
And this be true, till Time shall close,
That Principles are rain'd in blood ;

Not yet the wise of heart would cease
To hold his hope thro' shame and guilt,
But with his hand against the hilt,
Would pace the troubled land, like
Peace ;

Not less, tho' dogs of Faction bay,
 Would serve his kind in deed and word,
 Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,
 That knowledge takes the sword away—

Would love the gleams of good that broke
 From either side, nor veil his eyes :
 And if some dreadful need should rise
 Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke :

To-morrow yet would reap to-day,
 As we bear blossom of the dead ;
 Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed
 Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

ENGLAND AND AMERICA IN 1782

O THOU, that sendest out the man
 To rule by land and sea,
 Strong mother of a Lion-line,
 Be proud of those strong sons of thine
 Who wrench'd their rights from thee !

What wonder, if in noble heat
 Those men thine arms withstood,
 Retaught the lesson thou hadst taught,
 And in thy spirit with thee fought—
 Who sprang from English blood !

But Thou rejoice with liberal joy,
 Lift up thy rocky face,
 And shatter, when the storms are black,
 In many a streaming torrent back,
 The seas that shock thy base !

Whatever harmonies of law
 The growing world assume,
 Thy work is thine—The single note
 From that deep chord which Hampden
 smote
 Will vibrate to the doom.

THE GOOSE

I KNEW an old wife lean and poor,
 Her rags scarce held together ;
 There strode a stranger to the door,
 And it was windy weather.

He held a goose upon his arm,
 He utter'd rhyme and reason,
 'Here, take the goose, and keep you
 warm,
 It is a stormy season.'

She caught the white goose by the leg,
 A goose—'twas no great matter.
 The goose let fall a golden egg
 With cackle and with clatter.

She dropt the goose, and caught the
 pelf,
 And ran to tell her neighbours ;
 And bless'd herself, and cursed herself,
 And rested from her labours.

And feeding high, and living soft,
 Grew plump and able-bodied ;
 Until the grave churchwarden doff'd,
 The parson smirk'd and nodded.

So sitting, served by man and maid,
 She felt her heart grow prouder :
 But ah ! the more the white goose laid
 It clack'd and cackled louder.

It clutter'd here, it chuckled there ;
 It stirr'd the old wife's mettle :
 She shifted in her elbow-chair,
 And hurl'd the pan and kettle.

'A quinsy choke thy cursed note !'
 Then wax'd her anger stronger.
 'Go, take the goose, and wring her throat,
 I will not bear it longer.'

Then yelp'd the cur, and yawl'd the cat ;
 Ran Gaffer, stumbled Gammer.
 The goose flew this way and flew that,
 And fill'd the house with clamour.

As head and heels upon the floor
 They flounder'd all together,
 There strode a stranger to the door,
 And it was windy weather :

He took the goose upon his arm,
 He utter'd words of scorning ;
 'So keep you cold, or keep you warm,
 It is a stormy morning.'

The wild wind rang from park and plain,
And round the attics rumbled,
Till all the tables danced again,
And half the chimneys tumbled.

The glass blew in, the fire blew out,
The blast was hard and harder.

Her cap blew off, her gown blew up,
And a whirlwind clear'd the larder :

And while on all sides breaking loose
Her household fled the danger,
Quoth she, 'The Devil take the goose,
And God forget the stranger !'

ENGLISH IDYLS

AND OTHER POEMS

THE EPIC

At Francis Allen's on the Christmas-
eve,—
The game of forfeits done—the girls all
kiss'd
Beneath the sacred bush and past away—
The parson Holmes, the poet Everard
Hall,
The host, and I sat round the wassail-
bowl,
Then half-way ebb'd : and there we held
a talk,
How all the old honour had from Christ-
mas gone,
Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd
games
In some odd nooks like this ; till I, tired
out
With cutting eights that day upon the
pond,
Where, three times slipping from the
outer edge,
I bump'd the ice into three several stars,
Fell in a doze ; and half-awake I heard
The parson taking wide and wider
sweeps,
Now harping on the church-commis-
sioners,
Now hawking at Geology and schism ;
Until I woke, and found him settled down
Upon the general decay of faith
Right thro' the world, 'at home was little
left,

And none abroad : there was no anchor,
none,
To hold by.' Francis, laughing, clapt
his hand
On Everard's shoulder, with 'I hold by
him.'
'And I,' quoth Everard, 'by the wassail-
bowl.'
'Why yes,' I said, 'we knew your gift
that way
At college : but another which you had,
I mean of verse (for so we held it then),
What came of that ?' 'You know,' said
Frank, 'he burnt
His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve
books'—
And then to me demanding why ? 'Oh,
sir,
He thought that nothing new was said,
or else
Something so said 'twas nothing—that a
truth
Looks freshest in the fashion of the day :
God knows : he has a mint of reasons : ask.
It pleased *me* well enough.' 'Nay, nay,'
said Hall,
'Why take the style of those heroic times ?
For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
Nor we those times ; and why should any
man
Remodel models ? these twelve books of
mine
Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-
worth,

Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt.'
 'But I,'
 Said Francis, 'pick'd the eleventh from
 this hearth
 And have it; keep a thing, its use will
 come.
 I hoard it as a sugar-plum for Holmes.'
 He laugh'd, and I, tho' sleepy, like a
 horse
 That hears the corn-bin open, prick'd my
 ears;
 For I remember'd Everard's college fame
 When we were Freshmen: then at my
 request
 He brought it; and the poet little urged,
 But with some prelude of disparagement,
 Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and
 aes,
 Deep-chested music, and to this result.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
 Among the mountains by the winter sea;
 Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
 Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,
 King Arthur: then, because his wound
 was deep,

The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
 Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
 On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
 Lay a great water, and the moon was
 full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir
 Bedivere:

'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
 Whereof this world holds record. Such
 a sleep

They sleep—the men I loved. I think
 that we

Shall never more, at any future time,
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly
 deeds,

Walking about the gardens and the halls
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
 I perish by this people which I made,—

Tho' Merlin sware that I should come
 again

To rule once more—but let what will be,
 be,

I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
 That without help I cannot last till morn.
 Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
 Which was my pride: for thou remem-
 berest how

In those old days, one summer noon, an
 arm

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
 derful,

Holding the sword—and how I row'd
 across

And took it, and have worn it, like a
 king:

And, wheresoever I am sung or told
 In aftertime, this also shall be known:
 But now delay not: take Excalibur,
 And fling him far into the middle mere:
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring
 me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
 'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee
 thus,

Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
 A little thing may harm a wounded man.
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee
 word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he
 stept

And in the moon athwart the place of
 tombs,

Where lay the mighty bones of ancient
 men,

Old knights, and over them the sea-wind
 sang

Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He,
 stepping down

By zig-zag paths," and juts of pointed rock,
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand
 Excalibur,

And o'er him, drawing it, the winter
 moon,

Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran
 forth

And sparkled keen with frost against the
hilt :

For all the haft twinkled with diamond
sparks,

Myriads of topez-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he
stood,

This way and that dividing the swift
mind,

In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd

There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the
marge.

So strode he back slow to the wounded
King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
vere :

‘Hast thou perform’d my mission which
I gave?

What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?’

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
‘I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.’

To whom replied King Arthur, faint
and pale :

‘Thou hast betray’d thy nature and thy
name,

Not rendering true answer, as beseem’d
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :

For surer sign had follow’d, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.

This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me
word.’

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the
mere,

Counting the dewy pebbles, fix’d in
thought ;

But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he
smote

His palms together, and he cried aloud,
‘And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,

Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of
many men.

What good should follow this, if this were
done?

What harm, undone? deep harm to dis-
obey,

Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?

The King is sick, and knows not what he
does.

What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? but were this
kept,

Stored in some treasure-house of mighty
kings,

Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, ‘King Arthur’s sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.

Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the
deeps

Upon the hidden bases of the hills.”
So might some old man speak in the
aftertime

To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame
were lost.’

So spake he, clouded with his own
conceit,

And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded
King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing
heavily :

‘What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?’

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
‘I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.’

To whom replied King Arthur, much
in wrath :

‘Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow’d of the power in his eye
That bow’d the will. I see thee what
thou art,

For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,

In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious
hilt ;

Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee
hence :

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and
ran,

And, leaping down the ridges lightly,
plunged

Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the
sword,

And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The
great brand

Made lightnings in the splendour of the
moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirl'd
in an arch,

Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter
shock

By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
derful,

And caught him by the hilt, and bran-
dish'd him

Three times, and drew him under in the
mere.

And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing
thicker breath :

'Now see I by thine eyes that this is
done.

Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or
seen ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the
gems

Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-
ing him ;

But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
derful,

That caught him by the hilt, and bran-
dish'd him

Three times, and drew him under in the
mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breath-
ing hard :

'My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I
were gone.

Make broad thy shoulders to receive my
weight,

And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall
die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half
rose,

Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,

And would have spoken, but he found
not words,

Then took with care, and kneeling on
one knee,

O'er both his shoulders drew the languid
hands,

And rising bore him thro' the place of
tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted
hard,

Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd
the King,

Muttering and murmuring at his ear,
'Quick, quick !

I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to
ridge,

Clothed with his breath, and looking, as
he walk'd,

Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a
cry

Before. His own thought drove him, like
a goad.

Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and
right

The bare black cliff clang'd round him,
as he based

His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed
heels—

And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky
barge,

Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them ; and descending they were
ware

That all the decks were dense with stately
forms

Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream
—by these

Three Queens with crowns of gold—and
from them rose

A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one
comes,

Or hath come, since the making of the
world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, ' Place me in
the barge,'

And to the barge they came. There those
three Queens

Put forth their hands, and took the King,
and wept.

But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and
chafed his hands,

And call'd him by his name, complaining
loud,

And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face
was white

And colourless, and like the wither'd
moon

Smote by the fresh beam of the springing
east ;

And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd
with drops

Ofonset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parch'd
with dust ;

Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that
fringed his lips.

So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in
rest,

From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
' Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I
go ?

Where shall I hide my forehead and my
eyes ?

For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble
chance,

And every chance brought out a noble
knight.

Such times have been not since the light
that led

The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is
dissolved

Which was an image of the mighty world ;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the
years,

Among new men, strange faces, other
minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the
barge :

' The old order changeth, yielding place
to new,

And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the
world.

Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I
have done

May He within Himself make pure ! but
thou,

If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are
wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore,
let thy voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or
goats

That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of
prayer

Both for themselves and those who call
them friend ?

For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God.

But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion ;

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-
lawns

And bowery hollows crown'd with summer
sea,

Where I will heal me of my grievous
wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and
sail

Moved from the brink, like some full-
breasted swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes
the flood

With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir
Bedivere

Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge
of dawn,

And on the mere the wailing died away.

HERE ended Hall, and our last light,
that long

Had wink'd and threaten'd darkness,
flared and fell :

At which the Parson, sent to sleep with
sound,

And waked with silence, grunted ' Good !'
but we

Sat rapt : it was the tone with which he
read—

Perhaps some modern touches here and
there

Redeem'd it from the charge of nothing-
ness—

Or else we loved the man, and prized his
work ;

I know not : but we sitting, as I said,
The cock crew loud ; as at that time
of year

The lusty bird takes every hour for dawn :
Then Francis, muttering, like a man
ill-used,

' There now—that's nothing !' drew a
little back,

And drove his heel into the smoulder'd
log,

That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue :
And so to bed ; where yet in sleep I seem'd
To sail with Arthur under looming shores,
Point after point ; till on to dawn, when
dreams

Begin to feel the truth and stir of day,
To me, methought, who waited with a
crowd,

There came a bark that, blowing forward,
bore

King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
Of stateliest port ; and all the people
cried,

' Arthur is come again : he cannot die.'
Then those that stood upon the hills
behind

Repeated—' Come again, and thrice as
fair ;'

And, further inland, voices echo'd—
' Come

With all good things, and war shall be
no more.'

At this a hundred bells began to peal,
That with the sound I woke, and heard
indeed

The clear church-bells ring in the
Christmas-morn.

THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER ;

OR, THE PICTURES

THIS morning is the morning of the day,
When I and Eustace from the city went
To see the Gardener's Daughter ; I and he,
Brothers in Art ; a friendship so complete
Portion'd in halves between us, that we
grew

The fable of the city where we dwelt.

My Eustace might have sat for Hercules;
So muscular he spread, so broad of breast.
He, by some law that holds in love, and
draws

The greater to the lesser, long desired
A certain miracle of symmetry,
A miniature of loveliness, all grace
Summ'd up and closed in little ;—Juliet,
she

So light of foot, so light of spirit—oh, she
To me myself, for some three careless
moons,

The summer pilot of an empty heart
Unto the shores of nothing! Know you not
Such touches are but embassies of love,
To tamper with the feelings, ere he found
Empire for life? but Eustace painted her,
And said to me, she sitting with us then,
'When will *you* paint like this?' and I
replied,

(My words were half in earnest, half in
jest,)

'Tis not your work, but Love's. Love,
unperceived,

A more ideal Artist he than all,
Came, drew your pencil from you, made
those eyes

Darker than darkest pansies, and that hair
More black than ashbuds in the front of
March.'

And Juliet answer'd laughing, 'Go and see
The Gardener's daughter: trust me, after
that,

You scarce can fail to match his master-
piece.'

And up we rose, and on the spur we went.

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.
News from the humming city comes to it
In sound of funeral or of marriage bells;
And, sitting muffled in dark leaves, you
hear

The windy clanging of the minster clock;
Although between it and the garden lies
A league of grass, wash'd by a slow broad
stream,

That, stir'd with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,
Barge-laden, to three arches of a bridge
Crown'd with the minster-towers.

The fields between
Are dewy-fresh, browsed by deep-udder'd
kine,

And all about the large lime feathers low,
The lime a summer home of murmurous
wings.

In that still place she, hoarded in herself,
Grew, seldom seen; not less among us
lived

Her fame from lip to lip. Who had not
heard

Of Rose, the Gardener's daughter? Where
was he,

So blunt in memory, so old at heart,
At such a distance from his youth in grief,
That, having seen, forgot? The common
mouth,

So gross to express delight, in praise of
her

Grew oratory. Such a lord is Love,
And Beauty such a mistress of the world.

And if I said that Fancy, led by Love,
Would play with flying forms and images,
Yet this is also true, that, long before
I look'd upon her, when I heard her name
My heart was like a prophet to my heart,
And told me I should love. A crowd of
hopes,

That sought to sow themselves like
winged seeds,

Born out of everything I heard and saw,
Flutter'd about my senses and my soul;
And vague desires, like fitful blasts of
balm

To one that travels quickly, made the air
Of Life delicious, and all kinds of thought,
That verged upon them, sweeter than the
dream

Dream'd by a happy man, when the dark
East,

Unseen, is brightening to his bridal morn.

And sure this orbit of the memory folds
For ever in itself the day we went
To see her. All the land in flowery
squares,

Beneath a broad and equal-blowing wind,
Smelt of the coming summer, as one large
cloud

Drew downward: but all else of heaven
was pure

Up to the Sun, and May from verge to
verge,
And May with me from head to heel.
And now,
As tho' 'twere yesterday, as tho' it were
The hour just flown, that morn with all
its sound,
(For those old Mays had thrice the life
of these,)
Rings in mine ears. The steer forgot to
graze,
And, where the hedge-row cuts the
pathway, stood,
Leaning his horns into the neighbour field,
And lowing to his fellows. From the
woods
Came voices of the well-contented doves.
The lark could scarce get out his notes
for joy,
But shook his song together as he near'd
His happy home, the ground. To left
and right,
The cuckoo told his name to all the hills ;
The mellow ouzel fluted in the elm ;
The redcap whistled ; and the nightingale
Sang loud, as tho' he were the bird of day.
And Eustace turn'd, and smiling said
to me,
' Hear how the bushes echo ! by my life,
These birds have joyful thoughts. Think
you they sing
Like poets, from the vanity of song ?
Or have they any sense of why they sing ?
And would they praise the heavens for
what they have ?'
And I made answer, ' Were there nothing
else
For which to praise the heavens but only
love,
That only love were cause enough for
praise.'
Lightly he laugh'd, as one that read
my thought,
And on we went ; but ere an hour had
pass'd,
We reach'd a meadow slanting to the
North ;
Down which a well-worn pathway courted
us
To one green wicket in a privet hedge ;

This, yielding, gave into a grassy walk
Thro' crowded lilac-ambush trimly pruned ;
And one warm gust, full-fed with perfume,
blew
Beyond us, as we enter'd in the cool.
The garden stretches southward. In the
midst
A cedar spread his dark-green layers of
shade.
The garden-glasses glanced, and mo-
mentally
The twinkling laurel scatter'd silver lights.
' Eustace,' I said, ' this wonder keeps
the house.'
He nodded, but a moment afterwards
He cried, ' Look ! look !' Before he ceased
I turn'd,
And, ere a star can wink, beheld her there.
For up the porch there grew an Eastern
rose,
That, flowering high, the last night's gale
had caught,
And blown across the walk. One arm
aloft—
Gown'd in pure white, that fitted to the
shape—
Holding the bush, to fix it back, she stood,
A single stream of all her soft brown hair
Pour'd on one side : the shadow of the
flowers
Stole all the golden gloss, and, wavering
Lovingly lower, trembled on her waist—
Ah, happy shade—and still went waver-
ing down,
But, ere it touch'd a foot, that might have
danced
The greensward into greener circles, dipt,
And mix'd with shadows of the common
ground !
But the full day dwelt on her brows, and
sunn'd
Her violet eyes, and all her Hebe bloom,
And doubled his own warmth against her
lips,
And on the bounteous wave of such a
breast
As never pencil drew. Half light, half
shade,
She stood, a sight to make an old man
young.

So rapt, we near'd the house; but she,
a Rose
In roses, mingled with her fragrant toil,
Nor heard us come, nor from her tendance
turn'd

Into the world without; till close at hand,
And almost ere I knew mine own intent,
This murmur broke the stillness of that
air

Which brooded round about her:

'Ah, one rose,
One rose, but one, by those fair fingers
cull'd,
Were worth a hundred kisses press'd on
lips
Less exquisite than thine.'

She look'd: but all
Suffused with blushes—neither self-pos-
sess'd

Nor startled, but betwixt this mood and
that,

Divided in a graceful quiet—paused,
And dropt the branch she held, and turn-
ing, wound

Her looser hair in braid, and stirr'd her
lips

For some sweet answer, tho' no answer
came,

Nor yet refused the rose, but granted it,
And moved away, and left me, statue-like,
In act to render thanks.

I, that whole day,
Saw her no more, altho' I linger'd there
Till every daisy lept, and Love's white
star

Beam'd thro' the thicken'd cedar in the
dusk.

So home we went, and all the livelong
way

With solemn gibe did Eustace banter me.
'Now,' said he, 'will you climb the top
of Art.

You cannot fail but work in hues to dim
The Titianic Flora. Will you match
My Juliet? you, not you,—the Master,
Love,

A more ideal Artist he than all.'

So home I went, but could not sleep
for joy,

Reading her perfect features in the gloom,

Kissing the rose she gave me o'er and o'er,
And shaping faithful record of the glance
That graced the giving—such a noise of
life

Swarm'd in the golden present, such a
voice

Call'd to me from the years to come, and
such

A length of bright horizon rimm'd the
dark.

And all that night I heard the watchman
peal

The sliding season: all that night I heard
The heavy clocks knolling the drowsy
hours.

The drowsy hours, dispensers of all good,
O'er the mute city stole with folded wings,
Distilling odours on me as they went
To greet their fairer sisters of the East.

Love at first sight, first-born, and heir
to all,

Made this night thus. Henceforward
squall nor storm

Could keep me from that Eden where she
dwelt.

Light pretexts drew me; sometimes a
Dutch love

For tulips; then for roses, moss or musk,
To grace my city rooms; or fruits and
cream

Served in the weeping elm; and more and
more

A word could bring the colour to my
cheek;

A thought would fill my eyes with happy
dew;

Love trebled life within me, and with
each

The year increased.

The daughters of the year,
One after one, thro' that still garden
pass'd;

Each garlanded with her peculiar flower
Danced into light, and died into the
shade;

And each in passing touch'd with some
new grace

Or seem'd to touch her, so that day by
day,

Like one that never can be wholly known,

Her beauty grew ; till Autumn brought
 an hour
 For Eustace, when I heard his deep 'I
 will,'
 Breathed, like the covenant of a God, to
 hold
 From thence thro' all the worlds : but I
 rose up
 Full of his bliss, and following her dark
 eyes
 Felt earth as air beneath me, till I reach'd
 The wicket-gate, and found her standing
 there.

There sat we down upon a garden
 mound,
 Two mutually enfolded ; Love, the third,
 Between us, in the circle of his arms
 Enwound us both ; and over many a range
 Of waning lime the gray cathedral towers,
 Across a hazy glimmer of the west,
 Reveal'd their shining windows : from
 them clash'd
 The bells ; we listen'd ; with the time
 we play'd,
 We spoke of other things ; we coursed
 about
 The subject most at heart, more near and
 near,
 Like doves about a dovecote, wheeling
 round
 The central wish, until we settled there.
 Then, in that time and place, I spoke
 to her,

Requiring, tho' I knew it was mine own,
 Yet for the pleasure that I took to hear,
 Requiring at her hand the greatest gift,
 A woman's heart, the heart of her I loved ;
 And in that time and place she answer'd
 me,
 And in the compass of three little words,
 More musical than ever came in one,
 The silver fragments of a broken voice,
 Made me most happy, faltering, 'I am
 thine.'

Shall I cease here ? Is this enough to
 say
 That my desire, like all strongest hopes,
 By its own energy fulfill'd itself,
 Merged in completion ? Would you learn
 at full

How passion rose thro' circumstantial
 grades
 Beyond all grades develop'd ? and indeed
 I had not staid so long to tell you all,
 But while I mused came Memory with
 sad eyes,
 Holding the folded annals of my youth ;
 And while I mused, Love with knit brows
 went by,
 And with a flying finger swept my lips,
 And spake, 'Be wise : not easily forgiven
 Are those, who setting wide the doors that
 bar
 The secret bridal chambers of the heart,
 Let in the day.' Here, then, my words
 have end.

Yet might I tell of meetings, of fare-
 wells—
 Of that which came between, more sweet
 than each,
 In whispers, like the whispers of the
 leaves
 That tremble round a nightingale—in
 sighs
 Which perfect Joy, perplex'd for utter-
 ance,
 Stole from her sister Sorrow. Might I
 not tell
 Of difference, reconciliation, pledges
 given,
 And vows, where there was never need
 of vows,
 And kisses, where the heart on one wild
 leap
 Hung tranced from all pulsation, as above
 The heavens between their fairy fleeces
 pale
 Sow'd all their mystic gulfs with fleeting
 stars ;
 Or while the balmy glooming, crescent-lit,
 Spread the light haze along the river-
 shores,
 And in the hollows ; or as once we met
 Unheedful, tho' beneath a whispering
 rain
 Night slid down one long stream of sigh-
 ing wind,
 And in her bosom bore the baby, Sleep.
 But this whole hour your eyes have
 been intent

On that veil'd picture—veil'd, for what it holds

May not be dwelt on by the common day.
This prelude has prepared thee. Raise thy soul ;

Make thine heart ready with thine eyes :
the time

Is come to raise the veil.

Behold her there,
As I beheld her ere she knew my heart,
My first, last love ; the idol of my youth,
The darling of my manhood, and, alas !
Now the most blessed memory of mine age.

DORA

WITH farmer Allan at the farm abode
William and Dora. William was his son,
And she his niece. He often look'd at them,

And often thought, ' I'll make them man
and wife.'

Now Dora felt her uncle's will in all,
And yearn'd toward William ; but the youth, because

He had been always with her in the house,
Thought not of Dora.

Then there came a day
When Allan call'd his son, and said,
' My son :

I married late, but I would wish to see
My grandchild on my knees before I die :
And I have set my heart upon a match.
Now therefore look to Dora ; she is well
To look to ; thrifty too beyond her age.
She is my brother's daughter : he and I
Had once hard words, and parted, and
he died

In foreign lands ; but for his sake I bred
His daughter Dora : take her for your
wife ;

For I have wish'd this marriage, night
and day,

For many years.' But William answer'd
short ;

' I cannot marry Dora ; by my life,
I will not marry Dora.' Then the old man
Was wroth, and doubled up his hands,
and said :

' You will not, boy ! you dare to answer
thus ?

But in my time a father's word was law,
And so it shall be now for me. Look to
it ;

Consider, William : take a month to
think,

And let me have an answer to my wish ;
Or, by the Lord that made me, you shall
pack,

And never more darken my doors again.'
But William answer'd madly ; bit his
lips,

And broke away. The more he look'd
at her

The less he liked her ; and his ways were
harsh ;

But Dora bore them meekly. Then
before

The month was out he left his father's
house,

And hired himself to work within the
fields ;

And half in love, half spite, he woo'd and
wed

A labourer's daughter, Mary Morrison.

Then, when the bells were ringing,
Allan call'd

His niece and said : ' My girl, I love you
well ;

But if you speak with him that was my
son,

Or change a word with her he calls his
wife,

My home is none of yours. My will is
law.'

And Dora promised, being meek. She
thought,

' It cannot be : my uncle's mind will
change !'

And days went on, and there was born
a boy

To William ; then distresses came on
him ;

And day by day he pass'd his father's
gate,

Heart-broken, and his father help'd him
not.

But Dora stored what little she could
save,

And sent it them by stealth, nor did they know

Who sent it ; till at last a fever seized
On William, and in harvest time he died.

Then Dora went to Mary. Mary sat
And look'd with tears upon her boy, and thought

Hard things of Dora. Dora came and said :

' I have obey'd my uncle until now,
And I have sinn'd, for it was all thro' me
This evil came on William at the first.
But, Mary, for the sake of him that's gone,

And for your sake, the woman that he chose,

And for this orphan, I am come to you :
You know there has not been for these five years

So full a harvest : let me take the boy,
And I will set him in my uncle's eye
Among the wheat ; that when his heart is glad

Of the full harvest, he may see the boy,
And bless him for the sake of him that's gone.'

And Dora took the child, and went her way

Across the wheat, and sat upon a mound
That was unsown, where many poppies grew.

Far off the farmer came into the field
And spied her not ; for none of all his men

Dare tell him Dora waited with the child ;
And Dora would have risen and gone to him,

But her heart fail'd her ; and the reapers reap'd,

And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

But when the morrow came, she rose and took

The child once more, and sat upon the mound ;

And made a little wreath of all the flowers
That grew about, and tied it round his hat
To make him pleasing in her uncle's eye.
Then when the farmer pass'd into the field
He spied her, and he left his men at work,

And came and said : ' Where were you yesterday ?

Whose child is that ? What are you doing here ?'

So Dora cast her eyes upon the ground,
And answer'd softly, ' This is William's child !'

' And did I not,' said Allan, ' did I not
Forbid you, Dora ?' Dora said again :
' Do with me as you will, but take the child,

And bless him for the sake of him that's gone !'

And Allan said, ' I see it is a trick
Got up betwixt you and the woman there.
I must be taught my duty, and by you !
You knew my word was law, and yet you dared

To slight it. Well—for I will take the boy ;

But go you hence, and never see me more.'
So saying, he took the boy that cried aloud

And struggled hard. The wreath of flowers fell*

At Dora's feet. She bow'd upon her hands,

And the boy's cry came to her from the field,

More and more distant. She bow'd down her head,

Remembering the day when first she came,
And all the things that had been. She bow'd down

And wept in secret ; and the reapers reap'd,

And the sun fell, and all the land was dark.

Then Dora went to Mary's house, and stood

Upon the threshold. Mary saw the boy
Was not with Dora. She broke out in praise

To God, that help'd her in her widowhood.
And Dora said, ' My uncle took the boy ;
But, Mary, let me live and work with you :
He says that he will never see me more.'
Then answer'd Mary, ' This shall never be,
That thou shouldst take my trouble on thyself :

And, now I think, he shall not have the boy,
 For he will teach him hardness, and to slight
 His mother ; therefore thou and I will go,
 And I will have my boy, and bring him home ;
 And I will beg of him to take thee back :
 But if he will not take thee back again,
 Then thou and I will live within one house,
 And work for William's child, until he grows
 Of age to help us.'

So the women kiss'd
 Each other, and set out, and reach'd the farm.
 The door was off the latch : they peep'd,
 and saw
 The boy set up betwixt his grandsire's knees,
 Who thrust him in the hollows of his arm,
 And clapt him on the hands and on the cheeks,
 Like one that loved him : and the lad stretch'd out
 And babbled for the golden seal, that hung
 From Allan's watch, and sparkled by the fire.
 Then they came in : but when the boy beheld
 His mother, he cried out to come to her :
 And Allan set him down, and Mary said :
 'O Father !—if you let me call you so—
 I never came a-begging for myself,
 Or William, or this child ; but now I come
 For Dora : take her back ; she loves you well.
 O Sir, when William died, he died at peace
 With all men ; for I ask'd him, and he said,
 He could not ever rue his marrying me—
 I had been a patient wife : but, Sir, he said
 That he was wrong to cross his father thus :

"God bless him !" he said, "and may he never know
 The troubles I have gone thro' !" Then he turn'd
 His face and pass'd—unhappy that I am !
 But now, Sir, let me have my boy, for you
 Will make him hard, and he will learn to slight
 His father's memory ; and take Dora back,
 And let all this be as it was before.'

So Mary said, and Dora hid her face
 By Mary. There was silence in the room ;
 And all at once the old man burst in sobs :—
 'I have been to blame—to blame. I have kill'd my son.
 I have kill'd him—but I loved him—my dear son.
 May God forgive me !—I have been to blame.
 Kiss me, my children.'

Then they clung about
 The old man's neck, and kiss'd him many times.
 And all the man was broken with remorse ;
 And all his love came back a hundred-fold ;
 And for three hours he sobb'd o'er William's child
 Thinking of William.

So those four abode
 Within one house together ; and as years
 Went forward, Mary took another mate ;
 But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

AUDLEY COURT

'THE Bull, the Fleece are cramm'd, and not a room
 For love or money. Let us picnic there
 At Audley Court.'

I spoke, while Audley feast
 Humm'd like a hive all round the narrow quay,
 To Francis, with a basket on his arm,
 To Francis just alighted from the boat,

And breathing of the sea. 'With all my heart,'

Said Francis. Then we shoulder'd thro' the swarm,

And rounded by the stillness of the beach To where the bay runs up its latest horn.

We left the dying ebb that faintly lipp'd The flat red granite ; so by many a sweep Of meadow smooth from aftermath we reach'd

The griffin-guarded gates, and pass'd thro' all

The pillar'd dusk of sounding sycamores, And cross'd the garden to the gardener's lodge,

With all its casements bedded, and its walls

And chimneys muffled in the leafy vine.

There, on a slope of orchard, Francis laid

A damask napkin wrought with horse and hound,

Brought out a dusky loaf that smelt of home,

And, half-cut-down, a pasty costly-made, Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret lay,

Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks Imbedded and injellied ; last, with these, A flask of cider from his father's vats, Prime, which I knew ; and so we sat and eat

And talk'd old matters over ; who was dead,

Who married, who was like to be, and how

The races went, and who would rent the hall :

Then touch'd upon the game, how scarce it was

This season ; glancing thence, discuss'd the farm,

The four-field system, and the price of grain ;

And struck upon the corn-laws, where we split,

And came again together on the king

With heated faces ; till he laugh'd aloud ;

And, while the blackbird on the pippin hung

To hear him, clapt his hand in mine and sang—

'Oh ! who would fight and march and countermarch,

Be shot for sixpence in a battle-field, And shovell'd up into some bloody trench Where no one knows ? but let me live my life.

'Oh ! who would cast and balance at a desk,

Perch'd like a crow upon a three-legg'd stool,

Till all his juice is dried, and all his joints Are full of chalk ? but let me live my life.

'Who'd serve the state ? for if I carved my name

Upon the cliffs that guard my native land, I might as well have traced it in the sands ;

The sea wastes all : but let me live my life.

'Oh ! who would love ? I woo'd a woman once,

But she was sharper than an eastern wind, And all my heart turn'd from her, as a thorn

Turns from the sea ; but let me live my life.'

He sang his song, and I replied with mine :

I found it in a volume, all of songs, Knock'd down to me, when old Sir Robert's pride,

His books—the more the pity, so I said— Came to the hammer here in March—
- and this—

I set the words, and added names I knew.

'Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, sleep, and dream of me :

Sleep, Ellen, folded in thy sister's arm, And sleeping, haply dream her arm is mine.

'Sleep, Ellen, folded in Emilia's arm ; Emilia, fairer than all else but thou, For thou art fairer than all else that is.

'Sleep, breathing health and peace upon her breast :

Sleep, breathing love and trust against her lip :

I go to-night : I come to-morrow morn.

'I go, but I return : I would I were The pilot of the darkness and the dream.

Sleep, Ellen Aubrey, love, and dream of me.'

So sang we each to either, Francis Hale,

The farmer's son, who lived across the bay,

My friend; and I, that having where-withal,

And in the fallow leisure of my life

A rolling stone of here and everywhere,

Did what I would; but ere the night we rose

And saunter'd home beneath a moon, that, just

In crescent, dimly rain'd about the leaf

Twilights of airy silver, till we reach'd

The limit of the hills; and as we sank

From rock to rock upon the glooming quay,

The town was hush'd beneath us: lower down

The bay was oily calm; the harbour-buoy,

Sole star of phosphorescence in the calm,

With one green sparkle ever and anon

Dipt by itself, and we were glad at heart.

WALKING TO THE MAIL

John. I'm glad I walk'd. How fresh the meadows look

Above the river, and, but a month ago,

The whole hill-side was redder than a fox.

Is yon plantation where this byway joins

The turnpike?

James. Yes.

John. And when does this come by?

James. The mail? At one o'clock.

John. What is it now?

James. A quarter to.

John. Whose house is that I see? No, not the County Member's with the vane:

Up higher with the yew-tree by it, and half

A score of gables.

James. That? Sir Edward Head's:

But he's abroad: the place is to be sold.

John. Oh, his. He was not broken.

James. No, sir, he, Vex'd with a morbid devil in his blood That veil'd the world with jaundice, hid his face

From all men, and commercing with himself,

He lost the sense that handles daily life—

That keeps us all in order more or less—

And sick of home went overseas for change.

John. And whither?

James. Nay, who knows? he's here and there.

But let him go; his devil goes with him,

As well as with his tenant, Jocky Dawes,

John. What's that?

James. You saw the man—on Monday, was it?—

There by the humpback'd willow; half stands up

And bristles; half has fall'n and made a bridge;

And there he caught the younker tickling trout—

Caught *in flagrante*—what's the Latin word?—

Delicto: but his house, for so they say, Was haunted with a jolly ghost, that shook

The curtains, whined in lobbies, tapt at doors,

And rummaged like a rat: no servant stay'd:

The farmer vext packs up his beds and chairs,

And all his household stuff; and with his boy

Betwixt his knees, his wife upon the tilt,

Sets out, and meets a friend who hails him, 'What!

You're flitting!' 'Yes, we're flitting,' says the ghost

(For they had pack'd the thing among the beds,)

'Oh well,' says he, 'you flitting with us too—

Jack, turn the horses' heads and home again.'

John. He left his wife behind; for so I heard.

James. He left her, yes. I met my lady once :

A woman like a butt, and harsh as crabs.

John. Oh yet but I remember, ten years back—

'Tis now at least ten years—and then she was—

You could not light upon a sweeter thing :
A body slight and round, and like a pear
In growing, modest eyes, a hand, a foot
Lessening in perfect cadence, and a skin
As clean and white as privet when it flowers.

James. Ay, ay, the blossom fades, and they that loved

At first like dove and dove were cat and dog.

She was the daughter of a cottager,
Out of her sphere. What betwixt shame and pride,

New things and old, himself and her, she sour'd

To what she is : a nature never kind !
Like men, like manners : like breeds like, they say :

Kind nature is the best : those manners next

That fit us like a nature second-hand ;
Which are indeed the manners of the great.

John. But I had heard it was this bill that past,

And fear of change at home, that drove him hence.

James. That was the last drop in the cup of gall.

I once was near him, when his bailiff brought

A Chartist pike. You should have seen him wince

As from a venomous thing : he thought himself

A mark for all, and shudder'd, lest a cry
Should break his sleep by night, and his nice eyes

Should see the raw mechanic's bloody thumbs

Sweat on his blazon'd chairs ; but, sir, you know

That these two parties still divide the world—

Of those that want, and those that have :
and still

The same old sore breaks out from age to age

With much the same result. Now I myself,

A Tory to the quick, was as a boy
Destructive, when I had not what I would.

I was at school—a college in the South :
There lived a flayflint near : we stole his fruit,

His hens, his eggs ; but there was law for us ;

We paid in person. He had a sow, sir. She,

With meditative grunts of much content,
Lay great with pig, wallowing in sun and mud.

By night we dragg'd her to the college tower

From her warm bed, and up the cork-screw stair

With hand and rope we haled the groaning sow,

And on the leads we kept her till she pigg'd.

Large area of prospect had the mother sow,

And but for daily loss of one she loved
As one by one we took them—but for this—

As never sow was higher in this world—
Might have been happy : but what lot is pure ?

We took them all, till she was left alone
Upon her tower, the Niobe of swine,
And so return'd unfarrow'd to her sty.

John. They found you out ?

James. Not they.

John. Well—after all—

What know we of the secret of a man ?
His nerves were wrong. What ails us,

who are sound,
That we should mimic this raw fool the world,

Which charts us all in its coarse blacks or whites,

As ruthless as a baby with a worm,
As cruel as a schoolboy ere he grows
To Pity—more from ignorance than will.

But put your best foot forward, or I
 fear
 That we shall miss the mail : and here it
 comes
 With five at top : as quaint a four-in-hand
 As you shall see—three pyebalds and a
 roan.

EDWIN MORRIS ;

OR, THE LAKE

O ME, my pleasant rambles by the lake,
 My sweet, wild, fresh three quarters of a
 year,

My one Oasis in the dust and drouth
 Of city life ! I was a sketcher then :
 See here, my doing : curves of mountain,
 bridge,

Boat, island, ruins of a castle, built
 When men knew how to build, upon a
 rock

With turrets lichen-gilded like a rock :
 And here, new-comers in an ancient hold,
 New-comers from the Mersey, million-
 aires,

Here lived the Hills—a Tudor-chimnied
 bulk

Of mellow brickwork on an isle of bowers.

O me, my pleasant rambles by the lake
 With Edwin Morris and with Edward
 Bull

The curate ; he was fatter than his cure.

But Edwin Morris, he that knew the
 names,

Long learned names of agaric, moss and
 fern,

Who forged a thousand theories of the
 rocks,

Who taught me how to skate, to row, to
 swim,

Who read me rhymes elaborately good,
 His own—I call'd him Crichton, for he
 seem'd

All-perfect, finish'd to the finger nail.

And once I ask'd him of his early life,
 And his first passion ; and he answer'd
 me ;

And well his words became him : was he
 not

A full-cell'd honeycomb of eloquence
 Stored from all flowers ? Poet-like he
 spoke.

‘ My love for Nature is as old as I ;
 But thirty moons, one honeymoon to that,
 And three rich sennights more, my love
 for her.

My love for Nature and my love for her,
 Of different ages, like twin-sisters grew,
 Twin-sisters differently beautiful.

To some full music rose and sank the sun,
 And some full music seem'd to move and
 change

With all the varied changes of the dark,
 And either twilight and the day between ;
 For daily hope fulfill'd, to rise again
 Revolving toward fulfilment, made it
 sweet

To walk, to sit, to sleep, to wake, to
 breathe.’

Or this or something like to this he
 spoke.

Then said the fat-faced curate Edward
 Bull,

‘ I take it, God made the woman for
 the man,

And for the good and increase of the
 world.

A pretty face is well, and this is well,
 To have a dame indoors, that trims us up,
 And keeps us tight ; but these unreal
 ways

Seem but the theme of writers, and in-
 deed

Worn threadbare. Man is made of solid
 stuff.

I say, God made the woman for the man,
 And for the good and increase of the
 world.’

‘ Parson,’ said I, ‘ you pitch the pipe
 too low :

But I have sudden touches, and can run
 My faith beyond my practice into his :

Tho’ if, in dancing after Letty Hill,
 I do not hear the bells upon my cap,
 I scarce have other music : yet say on.

What should one give to light on such a dream ?'

I ask'd him half-sardonically.

'Give?

Give all thou art,' he answer'd, and a light

Of laughter dimpled in his swarthy cheek ;

'I would have hid her needle in my heart,

To save her little finger from a scratch

No deeper than the skin : my ears could hear

Her lightest breath ; her least remark was worth

The experience of the wise. I went and came ;

Her voice fled always thro' the summer land ;

I spoke her name alone. Thrice-happy days !

The flower of each, those moments when we met,

The crown of all, we met to part no more.'

Were not his words delicious, I a beast To take them as I did ? but something jarr'd ;

Whether he spoke too largely ; that there seem'd

A touch of something false, some self-conceit,

Or over-smoothness : howsoe'er it was, He scarcely hit my humour, and I said :

'Friend Edwin, do not think yourself alone

Of all men happy. Shall not Love to me,

As in the Latin song I learnt at school, Sneeze out a full God-bless-you right and left ?

But you can talk : yours is a kindly vein : I have, I think,—Heaven knows—as much within ;

Have, or should have, but for a thought or two,

That like a purple beech among the greens Looks out of place : 'tis from no want in her ;

It is my shyness, or my self-distrust, Or something of a wayward modern mind Dissecting passion. Time will set me right.'

So spoke I knowing not the things that were.

Then said the fat-faced curate, Edward Bull :

'God made the woman for the use of man,

And for the good and increase of the world.'

And I and Edwin laughed ; and now we paused

About the windings of the marge to hear The soft wind blowing over meadowy holms

And alders, garden-isles ; and now we left The clerk behind us, I and he, and ran By ripply shallows of the lipping lake, Delighted with the freshness and the sound.

But, when the bracken rusted on their crags,

My suit had wither'd, nipt to death by him

That was a God, and is a lawyer's clerk, The rentroll Cupid of our rainy isles.

'Tis true, we met ; one hour I had, no more :

She sent a note, the seal an *Elle vous suit*, The close, 'Your Letty, only yours ;' and this

Thrice underscored. The friendly mist of morn

Clung to the lake. I boated over, ran My craft aground, and heard with beating heart

The Sweet-Gale rustle round the shelving keel ;

And out I stept, and up I crept : she moved,

Like Proserpine in Enna, gathering flowers :

Then low and sweet I whistled thrice ; and she,

She turn'd, we closed, we kiss'd, swore faith, I breathed

In some new planet : a silent cousin stole
Upon us and departed : 'Leave,' she
cried,

'O leave me !' 'Never, dearest, never :
here

I brave the worst : ' and while we stood
like fools

Embracing, all at once a score of pugs
And poodles yell'd within, and out they
came

Trustees and Aunts and Uncles. 'What,
with him !

Go' (shrill'd the cotton-spinning chorus) ;
'him !'

I choked. Again they shriek'd the
burthen—'Him !'

Again with hands of wild rejection 'Go !—
Girl, get you in !' She went—and in one
month

They wedded her to sixty thousand pounds,
To lands in Kent and messuages in York,
And slight Sir Robert with his watery
smile

And educated whisker. But for me,
They set an ancient creditor to work :
It seems I broke a close with force and
arms :

There came a mystic token from the king
To greet the sheriff, needless courtesy !
I read, and fled by night, and flying
turn'd :

Her taper glimmer'd in the lake below :
I turn'd once more, close-button'd to the
storm ;

So left the place, left Edwin, nor have seen
Him since, nor heard of her, nor cared to
hear.

Nor cared to hear ? perhaps : yet long
ago

I have pardon'd little Letty ; not indeed,
It may be, for her own dear sake but this,
She seems a part of those fresh days to me ;
For in the dust and drouth of London life
She moves among my visions of the lake,
While the prime swallow dips his wing,
or then

While the gold-lily blows, and overhead
The light cloud smoulders on the summer
crag.

ST. SIMEON STYLITES

ALTHO' I be the basest of mankind,
From scalp to sole one slough and crust
of sin,

Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven, scarce
meet

For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy,
I will not cease to grasp the hope I hold
Of saintdom, and to clamour, mourn and
sob,

Battering the gates of heaven with storms
of prayer,

Have mercy, Lord, and take away my sin.
Let this avail, just, dreadful, mighty
God,

This not be all in vain, that thrice ten
years,

Thrice multiplied by superhuman pangs,
In hungers and in thirsts, fevers and cold,
In coughs, aches, stitches, ulcerous throes
and cramps,

A sign betwixt the meadow and the cloud,
Patient on this tall pillar I have borne
Rain, wind, frost, heat, hail, damp, and
sleet, and snow ;

And I had hoped that ere this period closed
Thou wouldst have caught me up into thy
rest,

Denying not these weather-beaten limbs
The meed of saints, the white robe and
the palm.

O take the meaning, Lord ; I do not
breathe,

Not whisper, any murmur of complaint.
Pain heap'd ten-hundred-fold to this, were
still

Less burthen, by ten-hundred-fold, to bear,
Than were those lead-like tons of sin,
that crush'd

My spirit flat before thee. •

O Lord, Lord,
Thou knowest I bore this better at the
first,

For I was strong and hale of body then ;
And tho' my teeth, which now are dropt
away,

Would chatter with the cold, and all my
beard

Was tagg'd with icy fringes in the moon,
I drown'd the whoopings of the owl with
sound

Of pious hymns and psalms, and some-
times saw

An angel stand and watch me, as I sang.
Now am I feeble grown ; my end draws
nigh ;

I hope my end draws nigh : half deaf I am,
So that I scarce can hear the people hum
About the column's base, and almost blind,
And scarce can recognise the fields I
know ;

And both my thighs are rotted with the
dew ;

Yet cease I not to clamour and to cry,
While my stiff spine can hold my weary
head,

Till all my limbs drop piecemeal from the
stone,

Have mercy, mercy : take away my sin.

O Jesus, if thou wilt not save my soul,
Who may be saved ? who is it may be
saved ?

Who may be made a saint, if I fail here ?
Show me the man hath suffer'd more
than I.

For did not all thy martyrs die one death ?
For either they were stoned, or crucified,
Or burn'd in fire, or boil'd in oil, or sawn
In twain beneath the ribs ; but I die here
To-day, and whole years long, a life of
death.

Bear witness, if I could have found a way
(And heedfully I sifted all my thought)
More slowly-painful to subdue this home
Of sin, my flesh, which I despise and hate,
I had not stinted practice, O my God.

For not alone this pillar-punishment,
Not this alone I bore : but while I lived
In the white convent down the valley there,
For many weeks about my loins I wore
The rope that haled the buckets from the
well,

Twisted as tight as I could knot the noose ;
And spake not of it to a single soul,
Until the ulcer, eating thro' my skin,
Betray'd my secret penance, so that all
My brethren marvell'd greatly. More
than this

I bore, whereof, O God, thou knowest all.

Three winters, that my soul might
grow to thee,

I lived up there on yonder mountain
side.

My right leg chain'd into the crag, I lay
Pent in a roofless close of ragged stones ;
Inswathed sometimes in wandering mist,
and twice

Black'd with thy branding thunder, and
sometimes

Sucking the damps for drink, and eating
not,

Except the spare chance-gift of those
that came

To touch my body and be heal'd, and live :
And they say then that I work'd miracles,
Whereof my fame is loud amongst man-
kind,

Cured lameness, palsies, cancers. Thou,
O God,

Knowest alone whether this was or no.

Have mercy, mercy ! cover all my sin.

Then, that I might be more alone
with thee,

Three years I lived upon a pillar, high
Six cubits, and three years on one of
twelve ;

And twice three years I crouch'd on one
that rose

Twenty by measure ; last of all, I grew
Twice ten long weary weary years to this,
That numbers forty cubits from the soil.

I think that I have borne as much as
this—

Or else I dream—and for so long a time,
If I may measure time by yon slow light,
And this high dial, which my sorrow
crowns—

So much—even so.

And yet I know not well,
For that the evil ones come here, and say,
'Fall down, O Simeon : thou hast suffer'd
long

For ages and for ages !' then they prate
Of penances I cannot have gone thro',
Perplexing me with lies ; and oft I fall,
Maybe for months, in such blind lethargies
That Heaven, and Earth, and Time are
choked.

But yet
 Bethink thee, Lord, while thou and all
 the saints
 Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on
 earth
 House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
 Sit with their wives by fires, eat whole-
 some food,
 And wear warm clothes, and even beasts
 have stalls,
 I, 'tween the spring and downfall of the
 light,
 Bow down one thousand and two hundred
 times,
 To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the
 saints ;
 Or in the night, after a little sleep,
 I wake : the chill stars sparkle ; I am
 wet
 With drenching dews, or stiff with crack-
 ling frost.
 I wear an undress'd goatskin on my
 back ;
 A grazing iron collar grinds my neck ;
 And in my weak, lean arms I lift the
 cross,
 And strive and wrestle with thee till I
 die :
 O mercy, mercy ! wash away my sin.
 O Lord, thou knowest what a man I
 am ;
 A sinful man, conceived and born in sin :
 'Tis their own doing ; this is none of
 mine ;
 Lay it not to me. Am I to blame for
 this,
 That here come those that worship me ?
 Ha ! ha !
 They think that I am somewhat. What
 am I ?
 The silly people take me for a saint,
 And bring me offerings of fruit and
 flowers :
 And I, in truth (thou wilt bear witness
 here)
 Have all in all endured as much, and
 more
 Than many just and holy men, whose
 names
 Are register'd and calendar'd for saints.

Good people, you do ill to kneel to me.
 What is it I can have done to merit this ?
 I am a sinner viler than you all.
 It may be I have wrought some miracles,
 And cured some halt and maim'd ; but
 what of that ?
 It may be, no one, even among the saints,
 May match his pains with mine ; but
 what of that ?
 Yet do not rise ; for you may look on me,
 And in your looking you may kneel to
 God.
 Speak ! is there any of you halt or maim'd ?
 I think you know I have some power
 with Heaven
 From my long penance : let him speak
 his wish.
 Yes, I can heal him. Power goes
 forth from me.
 They say that they are heal'd. Ah,
 hark ! they shout
 'St. Simeon Stylites.' Why, if so,
 God reaps a harvest in me. O my soul,
 God reaps a harvest in thee. If this be,
 Can I work miracles and not be saved ?
 This is not told of any. They were saints.
 It cannot be but that I shall be saved ;
 Yea, crown'd a saint. They shout,
 'Behold a saint !'
 And lower voices saint me from above.
 Courage, St. Simeon ! This dull chrysalis
 Cracks into shining wings, and hope ere
 death
 Spreads more and more and more, that
 God hath now
 Sponged and made blank of crimeful
 record all
 My mortal archives.
 O my sons, my sons,
 I, Simeon of the pillar, by surname
 Stylites, among men ; I, Simeon,
 The watcher on the column till the end ;
 I, Simeon, whose brain the sunshine
 bakes ;
 I, whose bald brows in silent hours
 become
 Unnaturally hoar with rime, do now
 From my high nest of penance here pro-
 claim
 That Pontius and Iscariot by my side

Show'd like fair seraphs. On the coals
 I lay,
 A vessel full of sin : all hell beneath
 Made me boil over. Devils pluck'd my
 sleeve,
 Abaddon and Asmodeus caught at me.
 I smote them with the cross ; they
 swarm'd again.
 In bed like monstrous apes they crush'd
 my chest :
 They flapp'd my light out as I read : I
 saw
 Their faces grow between me and my
 book ;
 With cold-like whinny and with hoggish
 whine
 They burst my prayer. Yet this way
 was left,
 And by this way I 'scaped them. Mortify
 Your flesh, like me, with scourges and
 with thorns ;
 Smite, shrink not, spare not. If it may
 be, fast
 Whole Lents, and pray. I hardly, with
 slow steps,
 With slow, faint steps, and much exceed-
 ing pain,
 Have scrambled past those pits of fire,
 that still
 Sing in mine ears. But yield not me the
 praise :
 God only thro' his bounty hath thought
 fit,
 Among the powers and princes of this
 world,
 To make me an example to mankind,
 Which few can reach to. Yet I do not
 say
 But that a time may come—yea, even
 now,
 Now, now, his footsteps smite the thresh-
 old stairs
 Of life—I say, that time is at the doors
 When you may worship me without re-
 proach ;
 For I will leave my relics in your land,
 And you may carve a shrine about my
 dust,
 And burn a fragrant lamp before my
 bones,

When I am gather'd to the glorious
 saints.

While I spake then, a sting of shrewd-
 est pain
 Ran shrivelling thro' me, and a cloudlike
 change,
 In passing, with a grosser film made thick
 These heavy, horny eyes. The end ! the
 end !

Surely the end ! What's here ? a shape,
 a shade,

A flash of light. Is that the angel there
 That holds a crown ? Come, blessed
 brother, come.

I know thy glittering face. I waited
 long ;

My brows are ready. What ! deny it
 now ?

Nay, draw, draw, draw nigh. So I
 clutch it. Christ !

'Tis gone : 'tis here again ; the crown !
 the crown !

So now 'tis fitted on and grows to me,
 And from it melt the dews of Paradise,
 Sweet ! sweet ! spikenard, and balm, and
 frankincense.

Ah ! let me not be fool'd, sweet saints :
 I trust

That I am whole, and clean, and meet
 for Heaven.

Speak, if there be a priest, a man of
 God,

Among you there, and let him presently
 Approach, and lean a ladder on the shaft,
 And climbing up into my airy home,
 Deliver me the blessed sacrament ;
 For by the warning of the Holy Ghost,
 I prophesy that I shall die to-night,
 A quarter before twelve.

But thou, O Lord,
 Aid all this foolish people ; let them take
 Example, pattern : lead them to thy light.

THE TALKING OAK

ONCE more the gate behind me falls ;
 Once more before my face
 I see the moulder'd Abbey-walls,
 That stand within the chace.

Beyond the lodge the city lies,
 Beneath its drift of smoke ;
 And ah ! with what delighted eyes
 I turn to yonder oak.

For when my passion first began,
 Ere that, which in me burn'd,
 The love, that makes me thrice a man,
 Could hope itself return'd ;

To yonder oak within the field
 I spoke without restraint,
 And with a larger faith appeal'd
 Than Papist unto Saint.

For oft I talk'd with him apart,
 And told him of my choice,
 Until he plagiarised a heart,
 And answer'd with a voice.

Tho' what he whisper'd under Heaven
 None else could understand ;
 I found him garrulously given,
 A babbler in the land.

But since I heard him make reply
 Is many a weary hour ;
 'Twere well to question him, and try
 If yet he keeps the power.

Hail, hidden to the knees in fern,
 Broad Oak of Sumner-chace,
 Whose topmost branches can discern
 The roofs of Sumner-place !

Say thou, whereon I carved her name,
 If ever maid or spouse,
 As fair as my Olivia, came
 To rest beneath thy boughs.—

'O Walter, I have shelter'd here
 Whatever maiden grace
 The good old Summers, year by year
 Made ripe in Sumner-chace :

'Old Summers, when the monk was fat,
 And, issuing shorn and sleek,
 Would twist his girdle tight, and pat
 The girls upon the cheek,

'Ere yet, in scorn of Peter's-pence,
 And number'd bead, and shrift,
 Bluff Harry broke into the spence
 And turn'd the cowls adrift :

'And I have seen some score of those
 Fresh faces, that would thrive
 When his man-minded offset rose
 To chase the deer at five ;

'And all that from the town would stroll,
 Till that wild wind made work
 In which the gloomy brewer's soul
 Went by me, like a stork :

'The slight she-slips of loyal blood,
 And others, passing praise,
 Strait-laced, but all-too-full in bud
 For puritanic stays :

'And I have shadow'd many a group
 Of beauties, that were born
 In teacup-times of hood and hoop,
 Or while the patch was worn ;

'And, leg and arm with love-knots gay,
 About me leap'd and laugh'd
 The modish Cupid of the day,
 And shrill'd his tinsel shaft.

'I swear (and else may insects prick
 Each leaf into a gall)
 This girl, for whom your heart is sick,
 Is three times worth them all ;

'For those and theirs, by Nature's law,
 Have faded long ago ;
 But in these latter springs I saw
 Your own Olivia blow,

'From when she gamboll'd on the greens
 A baby-germ, to when
 The maiden blossoms of her teens
 Could number five from ten.

'I swear, by leaf, and wind, and rain,
 (And hear me with thine ears,)
 That, tho' I circle in the grain
 Five hundred rings of years—

'Yet, since I first could cast a shade,
Did never creature pass
So slightly, musically made,
So light upon the grass :

'For as to fairies, that will flit
To make the greensward fresh,
I hold them exquisitely knit,
But far too spare of flesh.'

Oh, hide thy knotted knees in fern,
And overlook the chace ;
And from thy topmost branch discern
The roofs of Sumner-place.

But thou, whereon I carved her name,
That oft hast heard my vows,
Declare when last Olivia came
To sport beneath thy boughs.

'O yesterday, you know, the fair
Was holden at the town ;
Her father left his good arm-chair,
And rode his hunter down.

'And with him Albert came on his.
I look'd at him with joy :
As cowlip unto oxslip is,
So seems she to the boy.

'An hour had past—and, sitting straight
Within the low-wheel'd chaise,
Her mother trundled to the gate
Behind the dappled grays.

'But as for her, she stay'd at home,
And on the roof she went,
And down the way you use to come,
She look'd with discontent.

'She left the novel half-uncut
Upon the rosewood shelf ;
She left the new piano shut :
She could not please herself.

'Then ran she, gamesome as the colt,
And livelier than a lark
She sent her voice thro' all the holt
Before her, and the park.

'A light wind chased her on the wing,
And in the chase grew wild,
As close as might be would he cling
About the darling child :

'But light as any wind that blows
So fleetly did she stir,
The flower, she touch'd on, dipt and rose,
And turn'd to look at her.

'And here she came, and round me play'd,
And sang to me the whole
Of those three stanzas that you made
About my "giant bole" ;

'And in a fit of frolic mirth
She strove to span my waist :
Alas, I was so broad of girth,
I could not be embraced.

'I wish'd myself the fair young beech
That here beside me stands,
That round me, clasping each in each,
She might have lock'd her hands.

'Yet seem'd the pressure thrice as sweet
As woodbine's fragile hold,
Or when I feel about my feet
The berried briony fold.'

O muffle round thy knees with fern,
And shadow Sumner-chace !
Long may thy topmost branch discern
The roofs of Sumner-place !

But tell me, did she read the name
I carved with many vows
When last with throbbing heart I came
To rest beneath thy boughs ?

'O yes, she wander'd round and round
These knotted knees of mine,
And found, and kiss'd the name she found,
And sweetly murmur'd thine.

'A teardrop trembled from its source,
And down my surface crept.
My sense of touch is something coarse,
But I believe she wept.

'Then flush'd her cheek with rosy light,
She glanced across the plain ;
But not a creature was in sight :
She kiss'd me once again.

'Her kisses were so close and kind,
That, trust me on my word,
Hard wood I am, and wrinkled rind,
But yet my sap was stirr'd :

'And even into my inmost ring
A pleasure I discern'd,
Like those blind motions of the Spring,
That show the year is turn'd.

'Thrice-happy he that may caress
The ringlet's waving balm—
The cushions of whose touch may press
The maiden's tender palm.

'I, rooted here among the groves
But languidly adjust
My vapid vegetable loves
With anthers and with dust :

'For ah ! my friend, the days were brief
Whereof the poets talk,
When that, which breathes within the leaf,
Could slip its bark and walk.

'But could I, as in times foregone,
From spray, and branch, and stem,
Have suck'd and gather'd into one
The life that spreads in them,

'She had not found me so remiss ;
But lightly issuing thro',
I would have paid her kiss for kiss,
With usury thereto.'

O flourish high, with leafy towers,
And overlook the lea,
Pursue thy loves among the bowers
But leave thou mine to me.

O flourish, hidden deep in fern,
Old oak, I love thee well ;
A thousand thanks for what I learn
And what remains to tell.

'Tis little more : the day was warm ;
At last, tired out with play,
She sank her head upon her arm
And at my feet she lay.

'Her eyelids dropp'd their silken eaves.
I breathed upon her eyes
Thro' all the summer of my leaves
A welcome mix'd with sighs.

'I took the swarming sound of life—
The music from the town—
The murmurs of the drum and fife
And lull'd them in my own.

'Sometimes I let a sunbeam slip,
To light her shaded eye ;
A second flutter'd round her lip
Like a golden butterfly ;

'A third would glimmer on her neck
To make the necklace shine ;
Another slid, a sunny fleck,
From head to ancle fine,

'Then close and dark my arms I spread,
And shadow'd all her rest—
Dropt dews upon her golden head,
An acorn in her breast.

'But in a pet she started up,
And pluck'd it out, and drew
My little oakling from the cup,
And flung him in the dew.

'And yet it was a graceful gift—
I felt a pang within
As when I see the woodman lift
His axe to slay my kin.

'I shook him down because he was
The finest on the tree.
He lies beside thee on the grass.
O kiss him once for me.

'O kiss him twice and thrice for me,
That have no lips to kiss,
For never yet was oak on lea
Shall grow so fair as this.'

Step deeper yet in herb and fern,
 Look further thro' the chace,
 Spread upward till thy boughs discern
 The front of Sumner-place.

This fruit of thine by Love is blest,
 That but a moment lay
 Where fairer fruit of Love may rest
 Some happy future day.

I kiss it twice, I kiss it thrice,
 The warmth it thence shall win
 To ripen life may magnetise
 The baby-oak within.

But thou, while kingdoms overset,
 Or lapse from hand to hand,
 Thy leaf shall never fail, nor yet
 Thine acorn in the land.

May never saw dismember thee,
 Nor wielded axe disjoint,
 That art the fairest-spoken tree
 From here to Lizard-point.

O rock upon thy towery-top
 All throats that gurgle sweet !
 All starry culmination drop
 Balm-dews to bathe thy feet !

All grass of silky feather grow—
 And while he sinks or swells
 The full south-breeze around thee blow
 The sound of minster bells.

The fat earth feed thy branchy root,
 That under deeply strikes !
 The northern morning o'er thee shoot,
 High up, in silver spikes !

Nor ever lightning char thy grain,
 But, rolling as in sleep,
 Low thunders bring the mellow rain,
 That makes thee broad and deep !

And hear me swear a solemn oath,
 That only by thy side
 Will I to Olive plight my troth,
 And gain her for my bride.

And when my marriage morn may fall,
 She, Dryad-like, shall wear
 Alternate leaf and acorn-ball
 In wreath about her hair.

And I will work in prose and rhyme,
 And praise thee more in both
 Than bard has honour'd beech or lime,
 Or that Thessalian growth,

In which the swarthy ringdove sat,
 And mystic sentence spoke ;
 And more than England honours that,
 Thy famous brother-oak,

Wherein the younger Charles abode
 Till all the paths were dim,
 And far below the Roundhead rode,
 And humm'd a surly hymn.

LOVE AND DUTY

OF love that never found his earthly close,
 What sequel? Streaming eyes and break-
 ing hearts?

Or all the same as if he had not been?
 Not so. Shall Error in the round of
 time

Still father Truth? O shall the braggart
 shout

For some blind glimpse of freedom work
 itself

Thro' madness, hated by the wise, to law
 System and empire? Sin itself be found
 The cloudy porch oft opening on the Sun?
 And only he, this wonder, dead, become
 Mere highway dust? or year by year alone
 Sit brooding in the ruins of a life,
 Nightmare of youth, the spectre of him-
 self?

If this were thus, if this, indeed, were
 all,

Better the narrow brain, the stony heart,
 The staring eye glazed o'er with sapless
 days,

The long mechanic pacings to and fro,
 The set gray life, and apathetic end.
 But am I not the nobler thro' thy love?
 O three times less unworthy! likewise
 thou

Art more thro' Love, and greater than
thy years,

The Sun will run his orbit, and the Moon
Her circle. Wait, and Love himself will
bring

The drooping flower of knowledge changed to
fruit

Of wisdom. Wait : my faith is large in
Time,

And that which shapes it to some perfect
end.

Will some one say, Then why not ill
for good?

Why took ye not your pastime? To that
man

My work shall answer, since I knew the
right

And did it ; for a man is not as God,
But then most Godlike being most a man.
—So let me think 'tis well for thee and
me—

Ill-fated that I am, what lot is mine
Whose foresight preaches peace, my heart
so slow

To feel it ! For how hard it seem'd to me,
When eyes, love-languid thro' half tears
would dwell

One earnest, earnest moment upon mine,
Then not to dare to see ! when thy low
voice,

Faltering, would break its syllables, to
keep

My own full-tuned,—hold passion in a
leash,

And not leap forth and fall about thy
neck,

And on thy bosom (deep desired relief !)
Rain out the heavy mist of tears, that
weigh'd

Upon my brain, my senses and my soul !
For Love himself took part against
himself

To warn us off, and Duty loved of Love—
O this world's curse,—beloved but hated
—came

Like Death betwixt thy dear embrace and
mine,

And crying, 'Who is this? behold thy
bride,'

She push'd me from thee.

If the sense is hard

To alien ears, I did not speak to these—
No, not to thee, but to thyself in me :
Hard is my doom and thine : thou
knowest it all.

Could Love part thus? was it not well
to speak,

To have spoken once? It could not but
be well.

The slow sweet hours that bring us all
things good,

The slow sad hours that bring us all
things ill,

And all good things from evil, brought
the night

In which we sat together and alone,
And to the want, that hollow'd all the
heart,

Gave utterance by the yearning of an eye,
That burn'd upon its object thro' such
tears

As flow but once a life.

The trance gave way

To those caresses, when a hundred times
In that last kiss, which never was the last,
Farewell, like endless welcome, lived and
died.

Then follow'd counsel, comfort, and the
words

That make a man feel strong in speaking
truth ;

Till now the dark was worn, and overhead
The lights of sunset and of sunrise mix'd
In that brief night ; the summer night,
that paused

Among her stars to hear us ; stars that
hung

Love-charm'd to listen : all the wheels of
Time

Spun round in station, but the end had
come.

O then like those, who clench their
nerves to rush

Upon their dissolution, we two rose,
There—closing like an individual life—

In one blind cry of passion and of pain,
Like bitter accusation ev'n to death,
Caught up the whole of love and utter'd
it,

And bade adieu for ever.

Live—yet live—
 Shall sharpest pathos blight us, knowing
 all
 Life needs for life is possible to will—
 Live happy ; tend thy flowers ; be tended
 by
 My blessing ! Should my Shadow cross
 thy thoughts
 Too sadly for their peace, remand it thou
 For calmer hours to Memory's darkest
 hold,
 If not to be forgotten—not at once—
 Not all forgotten. Should it cross thy
 dreams,
 O might it come like one that looks con-
 tent,
 With quiet eyes unfaithful to the truth,
 And point thee forward to a distant light,
 Or seem to lift a burthen from thy heart
 And leave thee freër, till thou wake
 refresh'd
 Then when the first low matin-chirp hath
 grown
 Full quire, and morning driv'n her plow
 of pearl
 Far furrowing into light the mounded
 rack,
 Beyond the fair green field and eastern
 sea.

THE GOLDEN YEAR

WELL, you shall have that song which
 Leonard wrote :
 It was last summer on a tour in Wales :
 Old James was with me : we that day
 had been
 Up Snowdon ; and I wish'd for Leonard
 there,
 And found him in Llanberis : then we
 crost
 Between the lakes, and clamber'd half
 way up
 The counter side ; and that same song of
 his
 He told me ; for I banter'd him, and
 swore
 They said he lived shut up within himself,
 A tongue-tied Poet in the feverous days,

That, setting the *how much* before the
 how,
 Cry, like the daughters of the horseleech,
 'Give,
 Cram us with all,' but count not me the
 herd !
 To which 'They call me what they
 will,' he said :
 'But I was born too late : the fair new
 forms,
 That float about the threshold of an age,
 Like truths of Science waiting to be
 caught—
 Catch me who can, and make the catcher
 crown'd—
 Are taken by the forelock. Let it be.
 But if you care indeed to listen, hear
 These measured words, my work of
 yestermorn.
 'We sleep and wake and sleep, but all
 things move ;
 The Sun flies forward to his brother Sun ;
 The dark Earth follows wheel'd in her
 ellipse ;
 And human things returning on them-
 selves
 Move onward, leading up the golden year.
 'Ah, tho' the times, when some new
 thought can bud,
 Are but as poets' seasons when they
 flower,
 Yet oceans daily gaining on the land,
 Have ebb and flow conditioning their
 march,
 And slow and sure comes up the golden
 year.
 'When wealth no more shall rest in
 mounded heaps,
 But smit with freër light shall slowly
 melt
 In many streams to fatten lower lands,
 And light shall spread, and man be liker
 man
 Thro' all the season of the golden year.
 'Shall eagles not be eagles ? wrens be
 wrens ?
 If all the world were falcons, what of
 that ?
 The wonder of the eagle were the less,
 But he not less the eagle. Happy days

Roll onward, leading up the golden year.
 'Fly, happy happy sails, and bear the
 Press;

Fly happy with the mission of the Cross;
 Knit land to land, and blowing haven-
 ward

With silks, and fruits, and spices, clear
 of toll,

Enrich the markets of the golden year.

'But we grow old. Ah! when shall
 all men's good

Be each man's rule, and universal Peace
 Lie like a shaft of light across the land,
 And like a lane of beams athwart the
 sea,

Thro' all the circle of the golden year?'

Thus far he flow'd, and ended; where-
 upon

'Ah, folly!' in mimic cadence answer'd
 James—

'Ah, folly! for it lies so far away,
 Not in our time, nor in our children's
 time,

'Tis like the second world to us that live;
 'Twere all as one to fix our hopes on
 Heaven

As on this vision of the golden year.'

With that he struck his staff against
 the rocks

And broke it,—James,—you know him,
 —old, but full

Of force and choler, and firm upon his
 feet,

And like an oaken stock in winter woods,
 O'erflourish'd with the hoary clematis:

Then added, all in heat:

'What stuff is this!

Old writers push'd the happy season
 back,—

The more fools they,—we forward:
 dreamers both:

You most, that in an age, when every
 hour

Must sweat her sixty minutes to the
 death,

Live on, God love us, as if the seedsman,
 rapt

Upon the teeming harvest, should not
 plunge

His hand into the bag: but well I know

That unto him who works, and feels he
 works,

This same grand year is ever at the
 doors.'

He spoke; and, high above, I heard
 them blast

The steep slate-quarry, and the great
 echo flap

And buffet round the hills, from bluff to
 bluff.

ULYSSES

It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren
 crags,

Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and
 dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and
 know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
 Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with
 those

That loved me, and alone; on shore, and
 when

Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
 Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known; cities of
 men

And manners, climates, councils, govern-
 ments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them
 all;

And drunk delight of battle with my
 peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy
 Troy.

I am a part of all that I have met;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose
 margin fades

For ever and for ever when I move.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
 As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled
 on life

Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains : but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something
more,

A bringer of new things ; and vile it
were

For some three suns to store and hoard
myself,

And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human
thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make
mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the
sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work,
I mine.

There lies the port ; the vessel puffs
her sail :

There gloom the dark broad seas. My
mariners,

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and
thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and
opposed

Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I
are old ;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil ;
Death closes all : but something ere the
end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be
done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with
Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the
rocks :

The long day wanes : the slow moon
climbs : the deep

Moans round with many voices. Come,
my friends,

'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows ; for my purpose
holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.

It may be that the gulfs will wash us
down :

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we
knew.

Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and
tho'

We are not now that strength which in
old days

Moved earth and heaven ; that which we
are, we are ;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong
in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

TITHONUS

THE woods decay, the woods decay and
fall,

The vapours weep their burthen to the
ground,

Man comes and tills the field and lies
beneath,

And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality

Consumes : I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,

A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a
dream

The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of
morn.

Alas ! for this gray shadow, once a
man—

So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he
seem'd

To his great heart none other than a God !
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'

Then didst thou grant mine asking with
a smile,

Like wealthy men who care not how they
give.

But thy strong Hours indignant work'd
their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted
me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me
maim'd

To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill
with tears

To hear me? Let me go : take back thy
gift :

Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
Where all should pause, as is most meet
for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart ; there
comes

A glimpse of that dark world where I
was born.

Once more the old mysterious glimmer
steals

From thy pure brows, and from thy
shoulders pure,

And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the
gloom,

Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to
mine,

Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild
team

Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke,
arise,

And shake the darkness from their
loosen'd manes,

And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo ! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer
given

Departest, and thy tears are on my
cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy
tears,

And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,

In days far-off, on that dark earth, be
true?

'The Gods themselves cannot recall their
gifts.'

Ay me ! ay me ! with what another
heart

In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee ;
saw

The dim curls kindle into sunny rings ;
Changed with thy mystic change, and
felt my blood

Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd
all

Thy presence and thy portals, while I
lay,

Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-
warm

With kisses balmier than half-opening
buds

Of April, and could hear the lips that
kiss'd

Whispering I knew not what of wild and
sweet,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo
sing,

While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East :
How can my nature longer mix with
thine?

Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled
feet

Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when
the steam

Floats up from those dim fields about the
homes

Of happy men that have the power to
die,

And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground ;
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my
grave :

Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by
morn ;

I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

LOCKSLEY HALL

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn :
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall ;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of Time ;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed ;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed :

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could see ;
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be.——

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast ;
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest ;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove ;
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, ' My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee.'

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, ' I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong ;'
Saying, ' Dost thou love me, cousin ?' weeping, ' I have loved thee long.'

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands ;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote oh all the chords with might ;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fulness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted ! O my Amy, mine no more !
O the dreary, dreary moorland ! O the barren, barren shore !

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue !

Is it well to wish thee happy ?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine !

Yet it shall be : thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is : thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this ? his eyes are heavy : think not they are glazed with wine.
Go to him : it is thy duty : kiss him : take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought :
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand !

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth !
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth !

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule !
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd forehead of the fool !

Well—'tis well that I should bluster !—Hadst thou less unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit ?
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years should come
As the many-winter'd crow that leads the clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort ? in division of the records of the mind ?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind ?

I remember one that perish'd : sweetly did she speak and move :
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore ?
No—she never loved me truly : love is love for evermore.

Comfort ? comfort scorn'd of devils ! this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the 'Never, never,' whisper'd by the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears ;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow : get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace ; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine ; a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down : my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his : it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

'They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffer'd'—Perish in thy self-contempt !

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy ! wherefore should I care ?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these ?
Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy : what is that which I should do ?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honour feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men:

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new:
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

So I triumph'd ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint:
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from point to point:

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn :

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moulder'd string?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness ! woman's pleasure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain :

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat ;

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starr'd ;—
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag ;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have scope and breathing space ;
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive, and they shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun ;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy ! but I *know* my words are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains !

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime ?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon !

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day :
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age (for mine I knew not) help me as when life begun :
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the Sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall !
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow ;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

GODIVA

*I waited for the train at Coventry ;
I hung with grooms and porters on the
bridge,
To watch the three tall spires ; and there
I shaped*

The city's ancient legend into this :—

Not only we, the latest seed of Time,
New men, that in the flying of a wheel
Cry down the past, not only we, that prate
Of rights and wrongs, have loved the
people well,
And loathed to see them overtax'd ; but
she

Did more, and underwent, and overcame,
The woman of a thousand summers back,
Godiva, wife to that grim Earl, who ruled
In Coventry : for when he laid a tax
Upon his town, and all the mothers
brought

Their children, clamouring, 'If we pay,
we starve !'

She sought her lord, and found him, where
he strode

About the hall, among his dogs, alone,
His beard a foot before him, and his hair

A yard behind. She told him of their
tears,

And pray'd him, 'If they pay this tax,
they starve.'

Whereat he stared, replying, half-amazed,
'You would not let your little finger ache
For such as *these*?'—'But I would die,'
said she.

He laugh'd, and swore by Peter and by
Paul :

Then fillip'd at the diamond in her ear ;
'Oh ay, ay, ay, you talk !'—'Alas !' she
said,

'But prove me what it is I would not do.'
And from a heart as rough as Esau's hand,
He answer'd, 'Ride you naked thro' the
town,

And I repeal it ;' and nodding, as in scorn,
He parted, with great strides among his
dogs.

So left alone, the passions of her mind,
As winds from all the compass shift and
blow,

Made war upon each other for an hour,
Till pity won. She sent a herald forth,
And bade him cry, with sound of trumpet,
all

The hard condition ; but that she would
loose

The people : therefore, as they loved her
well,

From then till noon no foot should pace
the street,

Noeye look down, she passing ; but that all
Should keep within, door shut, and
window barr'd.

Then fled she to her inmost bower,
and there

Unclass'd the wedded eagles of her belt,
The grim Earl's gift ; but ever at a breath
She linger'd, looking like a summer moon
Half-dipt in cloud : anon she shook her
head,

And shower'd the rippled ringlets to her
knee ;

Unclad herself in haste ; adown the stair
Stole on ; and, like a creeping sunbeam,
slid

From pillar unto pillar, until she reach'd
The gateway ; there she found her palfrey
trapt

In purple blazon'd with armorial gold.

Then she rode forth, clothed on with
chastity :

The deep air listen'd round her as she rode,
And all the low wind hardly breathed for
fear.

The little wide-mouth'd heads upon the
spout

Had cunning eyes to see : the barking cur
Made her cheek flame : her palfrey's foot-
fall shot

Light horrors thro' her pulses : the blind
walls

Were full of chinks and holes ; and
overhead

Fantastic gables, crowding, stared : but she
Not less thro' all bore up, till, last, she saw
The white-flower'd elder-thicket from the
field

Gleam thro' the Gothic archway in the
wall.

Then she rode back, clothed on with
chastity :

And one low churl, compact of thankless
earth,

The fatal byword of all years to come,

Boring a little auger-hole in fear,
Peep'd—but his eyes, before they had
their will,

Were shrivell'd into darkness in his head,
And dropt before him. So the Powers,
who wait

On noble deeds, cancell'd a sense misused ;
And she, that knew not, pass'd : and all
at once,

With twelve great shocks of sound, the
shameless noon

Was clash'd and hammer'd from a hundred
towers,

One after one : but even then she gain'd
Her bower ; whence reissuing, robed and
crown'd,

To meet her lord, she took the tax away
And built herself an everlasting name.

THE DAY-DREAM

PROLOGUE

O LADY FLORA, let me speak :

A pleasant hour has passed away
While, dreaming on your damask cheek,
The dewy sister-eyelids lay.

As by the lattice you reclined,
I went thro' many wayward moods

To see you dreaming—and, behind,
A summer crisp with shining woods.
And I too dream'd, until at last

Across my fancy, brooding warm,
The reflex of a legend past,

And loosely settled into form.
And would you have the thought I had,
And see the vision that I saw,

Then take the broidery-frame, and add
A crimson to the quaint Macaw,
And I will tell it. Turn your face,

Nor look with that too-earnest eye—
The rhymes are dazzled from their place
And order'd words asunder fly.

THE SLEEPING PALACE

I

THE varying year with blade and sheaf
Clothes and reclothes the happy plains,

Here rests the sap within the leaf,
 Here stays the blood along the veins.
 Faint shadows, vapours lightly curl'd,
 Faint murmurs from the meadows
 come,
 Like hints and echoes of the world
 To spirits folded in the womb.

II

Soft lustre bathes the range of urns
 On every slanting terrace-lawn.
 The fountain to his place returns
 Deep in the garden lake withdrawn.
 Here droops the banner on the tower,
 On the hall-hearths the festal fires,
 The peacock in his laurel bower,
 The parrot in his gilded wires.

III

Roof-haunting martins warm their eggs :
 In these, in those the life is stay'd.
 The mantles from the golden pegs
 Droop sleepily : no sound is made,
 Not even of a gnat that sings.
 More like a picture seemeth all
 Than those old portraits of old kings,
 That watch the sleepers from the wall.

IV

Here sits the Butler with a flask
 Between his knees, half-drain'd ; and
 there
 The wrinkled steward at his task,
 The maid-of-honour blooming fair ;
 The page has caught her hand in his :
 Her lips are sever'd as to speak :
 His own are pouted to a kiss :
 The blush is fix'd upon her cheek.

V

Till all the hundred summers pass,
 The beams, that thro' the Oriel shine,
 Make prisms in every carven glass,
 And beaker brimm'd with noble wine.
 Each baron at the banquet sleeps,
 Grave faces gather'd in a ring.
 His state the king reposing keeps.
 He must have been a jovial king.

VI

All round a hedge upshoots, and shows
 At distance like a little wood ;
 Thorns, ivies, woodbine, mistletoes,
 And grapes with bunches red as blood ;
 All creeping plants, a wall of green
 Close-matted, bur and brake and briar,
 And glimpsing over these, just seen,
 High up, the topmost palace spire.

VII

When will the hundred summers die,
 And thought and time be born again,
 And newer knowledge, drawing nigh,
 Bring truth that sways the soul of men ?
 Here all things in their place remain,
 As all were order'd, ages since.
 Come, Care and Pleasure, Hope and Pain,
 And bring the fated fairy Prince.

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

I

YEAR after year unto her feet,
 She lying on her couch alone,
 Across the purple coverlet,
 The maiden's jet-black hair has grown,
 On either side her tranced form
 Forth streaming from a braid of pearl :
 The slumbrous light is rich and warm,
 And moves not on the rounded curl.

II

The silk star-broider'd coverlid
 Unto her limbs itself doth mould
 Languidly ever ; and, amid
 Her full black ringlets downward
 roll'd,
 Glows forth each softly-shadow'd arm
 With bracelets of the diamond bright :
 Her constant beauty doth inform
 Stillness with love, and day with light.

III

She sleeps : her breathings are not heard
 In palace chambers far apart.
 The fragrant tresses are not stirr'd
 That lie upon her charmed heart.

She sleeps : on either hand upswells
 The gold-fringed pillow lightly
 prest :
 She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells
 A perfect form in perfect rest.

THE ARRIVAL

I

ALL precious things, discover'd late,
 To those that seek them issue forth ;
 For love in sequel works with fate,
 And draws the veil from hidden
 worth.

He travels far from other skies—
 His mantle glitters on the rocks—
 A fairy Prince, with joyful eyes,
 And lighter-footed than the fox.

II

The bodies and the bones of those
 That strove in other days to pass,
 Are wither'd in the thorny close,
 Or scatter'd blanching on the grass.
 He gazes on the silent dead :
 'They perish'd in their daring deeds.'
 This proverb flashes thro' his head,
 'The many fail : the one succeeds.'

III

He comes, scarce knowing what he
 seeks :
 He breaks the hedge : he enters
 there :
 The colour flies into his cheeks :
 He trusts to light on something fair ;
 For all his life the charm did talk
 About his path, and hover near
 With words of promise in his walk,
 And whisper'd voices at his ear.

IV

More close and close his footsteps
 wind :
 The Magic Music in his heart
 Beats quick and quicker, till he find
 The quiet chamber far apart.

His spirit flutters like a lark,
 He stoops—to kiss her—on his knee.
 'Love, if thy tresses be so dark,
 How dark those hidden eyes must be !'

THE REVIVAL

I

A TOUCH, a kiss ! the charm was snapt.
 There rose a noise of striking clocks,
 And feet that ran, and doors that clapt,
 And barking dogs, and crowing cocks ;
 A fuller light illumined all,
 A breeze thro' all the garden swept,
 A sudden hubbub shook the hall,
 And sixty feet the fountain leapt.

II

The hedge broke in, the banner blew,
 The butler drank, the steward scrawl'd,
 The fire shot up, the martin flew,
 The parrot scream'd, the peacock
 squall'd,
 The maid and page renew'd their strife,
 The palace bang'd, and buzz'd and
 clackt,
 And all the long-pent stream of life
 Dash'd downward in a cataract.

III

And last with these the king awoke,
 And in his chair himself uprear'd,
 And yawn'd, and rubb'd his face, and
 spoke,
 'By holy rood, a royal beard !
 How say you ? we have slept, my lords.
 My beard has grown into my lap.'
 The barons swore, with many words,
 'Twas but an after-dinner's nap.

IV

'Pardy,' return'd the king, 'but still
 My joints are somewhat stiff or so.
 My lord, and shall we pass the bill
 I mention'd half an hour ago ?'
 The chancellor, sedate and vain,
 In courteous words return'd reply :
 But dallied with his golden chain,
 And, smiling, put the question by.

THE DEPARTURE

I

AND on her lover's arm she leant,
 And round her waist she felt it fold,
 And far across the hills they went
 In that new world which is the old :
 Across the hills, and far away
 Beyond their utmost purple rim,
 And deep into the dying day
 The happy princess follow'd him.

II

'I'd sleep another hundred years,
 O love, for such another kiss ;'
 'O wake for ever, love,' she hears,
 'O love, 'twas such as this and this.'
 And o'er them many a sliding star,
 And many a merry wind was borne,
 And, stream'd thro' many a golden bar,
 The twilight melted into morn.

III

'O eyes long laid in happy sleep !'
 'O happy sleep, that lightly fied !'
 'O happy kiss, that woke thy sleep !'
 'O love, thy kiss would wake the dead !'
 And o'er them many a flowing range
 Of vapour buoy'd the crescent-bark,
 And, rapt thro' many a rosy change,
 The twilight died into the dark.

IV

'A hundred summers ! can it be ?
 And whither goest thou, tell me where ?'
 'O seek my father's court with me,
 For there are greater wonders there.'
 And o'er the hills, and far away
 Beyond their utmost purple rim,
 Beyond the night, across the day,
 Thro' all the world she follow'd him.

MORAL

I

So, Lady Flora, take my lay,
 And if you find no moral there,
 Go, look in any glass and say,
 What moral is in being fair.

Oh, to what uses shall we put
 The wildweed-flower that simply blows?
 And is there any moral shut
 Within the bosom of the rose?

II

But any man that walks the mead,
 In bud or blade, or bloom, may find,
 According as his humours lead,
 A meaning suited to his mind.
 And liberal applications lie
 In Art like Nature, dearest friend ;
 So 'twere to cramp its use, if I
 Should hook it to some useful end.

L'ENVOI

I

YOU shake your head. A random string
 Your finer female sense offends.
 Well—were it not a pleasant thing
 To fall asleep with all one's friends ;
 To pass with all our social ties
 To silence from the paths of men ;
 And every hundred years to rise
 And learn the world, and sleep again ;
 To sleep thro' terms of mighty wars,
 And wake on science grown to more,
 On secrets of the brain, the stars,
 As wild as aught of fairy lore ;
 And all that else the years will show,
 The Poet-forms of stronger hours,
 The vast Republics that may grow,
 The Federations and the Powers ;
 Titanic forces taking birth
 In divers seasons, divers climes ;
 For we are Ancients of the earth,
 And in the morning of the times.

II

So sleeping, so aroused from sleep
 Thro' sunny decads new and strange,
 Or gay quinqueniads would we reap
 The flower and quintessence of change.

III

Ah, yet would I—and would I might !
 So much your eyes my fancy take—
 Be still the first to leap to light
 That I might kiss those eyes awake !

For, am I right, or am I wrong,
 To choose your own you did not care ;
 You'd have *my* moral from the song,
 And I will take my pleasure there :
 And, am I right or am I wrong,
 My fancy, ranging thro' and thro',
 To search a meaning for the song,
 Perforce will still revert to you ;
 Nor finds a closer truth than this
 All-graceful head, so richly curl'd,
 And evermore a costly kiss
 The prelude to some brighter world.

IV

For since the time when Adam first
 Embraced his Eve in happy hour,
 And every bird of Eden burst
 In carol, every bud to flower,
 What eyes, like thine, have waken'd
 hopes,
 What lips, like thine, so sweetly
 join'd ?
 Where on the double rosebud droops
 The fulness of the pensive mind ;
 Which all too dearly self-involved,
 Yet sleeps a dreamless sleep to me ;
 A sleep by kisses undissolved,
 That lets thee neither hear nor see :
 But break it. In the name of wife,
 And in the rights that name may
 give,
 Are clasp'd the moral of thy life,
 And that for which I care to live.

EPILOGUE

So, Lady Flora, take my lay,
 And, if you find a meaning there,
 O whisper to your glass, and say,
 'What wonder, if he thinks me fair ?'
 What wonder I was all unwise,
 To shape the song for your delight
 Like long-tail'd birds of Paradise
 That float thro' Heaven, and cannot
 light ?
 Or old-world trains, upheld at court
 By Cupid-boys of blooming hue—
 But take it—earnest wed with sport,
 And either sacred unto you.

AMPHION

My father left a park to me,
 But it is wild and barren,
 A garden too with scarce a tree,
 And waster than a warren :
 Yet say the neighbours when they call,
 It is not bad but good land,
 And in it is the germ of all
 That grows within the woodland.

O had I lived when song was great
 In days of old Amphion,
 And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,
 Nor cared for seed or scion !
 And had I lived when song was great,
 And legs of trees were limber,
 And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,
 And fiddled in the timber !

'Tis said he had a tuneful tongue,
 Such happy intonation,
 Wherever he sat down and sung
 He left a small plantation ;
 Wherever in a lonely grove
 He set up his forlorn pipes,
 The gouty oak began to move,
 And flounder into hornpipes.

The mountain stir'd its bushy crown,
 And, as tradition teaches,
 Young ashes pirouetted down
 Coquetting with young beeches ;
 And briony-vine and ivy-wreath
 Ran forward to his rhyming,
 And from the valleys underneath
 Came little copses climbing.

The linden broke her ranks and rent
 The woodbine wreaths that bind her,
 And down the middle, buzz ! she went
 With all her bees behind her ;
 The poplars, in long order due,
 With cypress promenaded,
 The shock-head willows two and two
 By rivers galloped.

Came wet-shod alder from the wave,
 Came yews, a dismal coterie ;
 Each pluck'd his one foot from the grave,
 Poussetting with a sloe-tree :

Old elms came breaking from the vine,
 The vine stream'd out to follow,
 And, sweating rosin, plump'd the pine
 From many a cloudy hollow.

And wasn't it a sight to see,
 When, ere his song was ended,
 Like some great landslip, tree by tree,
 The country-side descended ;
 And shepherds from the mountain-eaves
 Look'd down, half-pleased, half-
 frighten'd,
 As dash'd about the drunken leaves
 The random sunshine lighten'd !

Oh, nature first was fresh to men,
 And wanton without measure ;
 So youthful and so flexile then,
 You moved her at your pleasure.
 Twang out, my fiddle ! shake the
 twigs !

And make her dance attendance ;
 Blow, flute, and stir the stiff-set sprigs,
 And scirrhous roots and tendons.

'Tis vain ! in such a brassy age
 I could not move a thistle ;
 The very sparrows in the hedge
 Scarce answer to my whistle ;
 Or at the most, when three-parts-sick
 With strumming and with scraping,
 A jackass heehaws from the rick,
 The passive oxen gaping.

But what is that I hear ? a sound
 Like sleepy counsel pleading ;
 O Lord !—'tis in my neighbour's ground,
 The modern Muses reading.
 They read Botanic Treatises,
 And Works on Gardening thro' there,
 And Methods of transplanting trees
 To look as if they grew there.

The wither'd Misses ! how they prose
 O'er books of travell'd seamen,
 And show you slips of all that grows
 From England to Van Diemen.
 They read in arbours clipt and cut,
 And alleys, faded places,
 By squares of tropic summer shut
 And warm'd in crystal cases.

But these, tho' fed with careful dirt,
 Are neither green nor sappy ;
 Half-conscious of the garden-squirt,
 The spindlings look unhappy.
 Better to me the meanest weed
 That blows upon its mountain,
 The vilest herb that runs to seed
 Beside its native fountain.

And I must work thro' months of toil,
 And years of cultivation,
 Upon my proper patch of soil
 To grow my own plantation.
 I'll take the showers as they fall,
 I will not vex my bosom :
 Enough if at the end of all
 A little garden blossom.

ST. AGNES' EVE

DEEP on the convent-roof the snows
 Are sparkling to the moon :
 My breath to heaven like vapour goes :
 May my soul follow soon !
 The shadows of the convent-towers
 Slant down the snowy sward,
 Still creeping with the creeping hours
 That lead me to my Lord :
 Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
 As are the frosty skies,
 Or this first snowdrop of the year
 That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
 To yonder shining ground ;
 As this pale taper's earthly spark,
 To yonder argent round ;
 So shows my soul before the Lamb,
 My spirit before Thee ;
 So in mine earthly house I am,
 To that I hope to be.
 Break up the heavens, O Lord ! and far,
 Thro' all yon starlight keen,
 Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
 In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors ;
 The flashes come and go ;
 All heaven bursts her starry floors,
 And strows her lights below,

And deepens on and up ! the gates
 Roll back, and far within
 For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
 To make me pure of sin.
 The sabbaths of Eternity,
 One sabbath deep and wide—
 A light upon the shining sea—
 The Bridegroom with his bride !

SIR GALAHAD

My good blade carves the casques of men,
 My tough lance thrusteth sure,
 My strength is as the strength of ten,
 Because my heart is pure.
 The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
 The hard brands shiver on the steel,
 The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,
 The horse and rider reel :
 They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
 And when the tide of combat stands,
 Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
 That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
 On whom their favours fall !
 For them I battle till the end,
 To save from shame and thrall :
 But all my heart is drawn above,
 My knees are bow'd in crypt and
 shrine :

I never felt the kiss of love,
 Nor maiden's hand in mine.
 More bounteous aspects on me beam,
 Me mightier transports move and thrill ;
 So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer
 A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
 A light before me swims,
 Between dark stems the forest glows,
 I hear a noise of hymns :
 Then by some secret shrine I ride ;
 I hear a voice but none are there ;
 The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
 The tapers burning fair.
 Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
 The silver vessels sparkle clean,
 The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
 And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
 I find a magic bark ;
 I leap on board : no helmsman steers :
 I float till all is dark.
 A gentle sound, an awful light !
 Three angels bear the holy Grail :
 With folded feet, in stoles of white,
 On sleeping wings they sail.
 Ah, blessed vision ! blood of God !
 My spirit beats her mortal bars,
 As down dark tides the glory slides,
 And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne
 Thro' dreaming towns I go,
 The cock crows ere the Christmas
 morn,
 The streets are dumb with snow.
 The tempest crackles on the leads,
 And, ringing, springs from brand and
 mail ;
 But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
 And gilds the driving hail.
 I leave the plain, I climb the height ;
 No branny thicket shelter yields ;
 But blessed forms in whistling storms
 Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
 Such hope, I know not fear ;
 I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
 That often meet me here.
 I muse on joy that will not cease,
 Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
 Pure lilies of eternal peace,
 Whose odours haunt my dreams ;
 And, stricken by an angel's hand,
 This mortal armour that I wear,
 This weight and size, this heart and
 eyes,
 Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
 And thro' the mountain-walls
 A rolling organ-harmony
 Swells up, and shakes and falls.
 Then move the trees, the copses nod,
 Wings flutter, voices hover clear :
 'O just and faithful knight of God !
 Ride on ! the prize is near.'

So pass I hostel, hall, and grange ;
 By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
 All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,
 Until I find the holy Grail.

EDWARD GRAY

SWEET Emma Moreland of yonder town
 Met me walking on yonder way,
 'And have you lost your heart?' she said ;
 'And are you married yet, Edward
 Gray?'

Sweet Emma Moreland spoke to me :
 Bitterly weeping I turn'd away :
 'Sweet Emma Moreland, love no more
 Can touch the heart of Edward Gray.

'Ellen Adair she loved me well,
 Against her father's and mother's will :
 To-day I sat for an hour and wept,
 By Ellen's grave, on the windy hill.

'Shy she was, and I thought her cold ;
 Thoughther proud, and fled over the sea ;
 Fill'd I was with folly and spite,
 When Ellen Adair was dying for me.

'Cruel, cruel the words I said !
 Cruelly came they back to-day :
 "You're too slight and fickle," I said,
 "To trouble the heart of Edward Gray."

'There I put my face in the grass—
 Whisper'd, "Listen to my despair :
 I repent me of all I did :
 Speak a little, Ellen Adair !"

'Then I took a pencil, and wrote
 On the mossy stone, as I lay,
 "Here lies the body of Ellen Adair ;
 And here the heart of Edward Gray !"

'Love may come, and love may go,
 And fly, like a bird, from tree to tree ;
 But I will love no more, no more,
 Till Ellen Adair come back to me.

'Bitterly wept I over the stone :
 Bitterly weeping I turn'd away :
 There lies the body of Ellen Adair !
 And there the heart of Edward Gray !'

WILL WATERPROOF'S
LYRICAL MONOLOGUE

MADE AT THE COCK

O PLUMP head-waiter at The Cock,
 To which I most resort,
 How goes the time? 'Tis five o'clock.
 Go fetch a pint of port :
 But let it not be such as that
 You set before chance-comers,
 But such whose father-grape grew fat
 On Lusitanian summers.

No vain libation to the Muse,
 But may she still be kind,
 And whisper lovely words, and use
 Her influence on the mind,
 To make me write my random rhymes,
 Ere they be half-forgotten ;
 Nor add and alter, many times,
 Till all be ripe and rotten.

I pledge her, and she comes and dips
 Her laurel in the wine,
 And lays it thrice upon my lips,
 These favour'd lips of mine ;
 Until the charm have power to make
 New lifeblood warm the bosom,
 And barren commonplaces break
 In full and kindly blossom.

I pledge her silent at the board ;
 Her gradual fingers steal
 And touch upon the master-chord
 Of all I felt and feel.
 Old wishes, ghosts of broken plans,
 And phantom hopes assemble ;
 And that child's heart within the man's
 Begins to move and tremble.

Thro' many an hour of summer suns,
 By many pleasant ways,
 Against its fountain upward runs
 The current of my days :
 I kiss the lips I once have kiss'd ;
 The gas-light wavers dimmer ;
 And softly, thro' a vinous mist,
 My college friendships glimmer.

I grow in worth, and wit, and sense,
 Unboding critic-pen,
 Or that eternal want of pence,
 Which vexes public men,
 Who hold their hands to all, and cry
 For that which all deny them—
 Who sweep the crossings, wet or dry,
 And all the world go by them.

Ah yet, tho' all the world forsake,
 Tho' fortune clip my wings,
 I will not cramp my heart, nor take
 Half-views of men and things.
 Let Whig and Tory stir their blood ;
 There must be stormy weather ;
 But for some true result of good
 All parties work together.

Let there be thistles, there are grapes ;
 If old things, there are new ;
 Ten thousand broken lights and shapes,
 Yet glimpses of the true.
 Let raffs be rife in prose and rhyme,
 We lack not rhymes and reasons,
 As on this whirligig of Time
 We circle with the seasons.

This earth is rich in man and maid ;
 With fair horizons bound :
 This whole wide earth of light and shade
 Comes out a perfect round.
 High over roaring Temple-bar,
 And set in Heaven's third story,
 I look at all things as they are,
 But thro' a kind of glory.

Head-waiter, honour'd by the guest
 Half-mused, or reeling ripe,
 The pint, you brought me, was the best
 That ever came from pipe.
 But tho' the port surpasses praise,
 My nerves have dealt with stiffer.
 Is there some magic in the place ?
 Or do my peptics differ ?

For since I came to live and learn,
 No pint of white or red
 Had ever half the power to turn
 This wheel within my head,

Which bears a season'd brain about,
 Unsubject to confusion,
 Tho' soak'd and saturate, out and out,
 Thro' every convolution.

For I am of a numerous house,
 With many kinsmen gay,
 Where long and largely we carouse
 As who shall say me nay :
 Each month, a birth-day coming on,
 We drink defying trouble,
 Or sometimes two would meet in one,
 And then we drank it double ;

Whether the vintage, yet unkept,
 Had relish fiery-new,
 Or elbow-deep in sawdust, slept,
 As old as Waterloo ;
 Or stow'd, when classic Canning died,
 In musty bins and chambers,
 Had cast upon its crusty side
 The gloom of ten Decembers.

The Muse, the jolly Muse, it is !
 She answer'd to my call,
 She changes with that mood or this,
 Is all-in-all to all :
 She lit the spark within my throat,
 To make my blood run quicker,
 Used all her fiery will, and smote
 Her life into the liquor.

And hence this halo lives about
 The waiter's hands, that reach
 To each his perfect pint of stout,
 His proper chop to each.
 He looks not like the common breed
 That with the napkin dally ;
 I think he came like Ganymede,
 From some delightful valley.

The Cock was of a larger egg
 Than modern poultry drop,
 Stept forward on a firmer leg,
 And cramm'd a plumper crop ;
 Upon an ampler dunghill trod,
 Crow'd lustier late and early,
 Sipt wine from silver, praising God,
 And raked in golden barley.

A private life was all his joy,
 Till in a court he saw
 A something-pottle-bodied boy
 That knuckled at the taw :
 He stoop'd and clutch'd him, fair and
 good,
 Flew over roof and casement :
 His brothers of the weather stood
 Stock-still for sheer amazement.

But he, by farmstead, thorpe and spire,
 And follow'd with acclaims,
 A sign to many a staring shire
 Came crowing over Thames.
 Right down by smoky Paul's they bore,
 Till, where the street grows straiter,
 One fix'd for ever at the door,
 And one became head-waiter.

But whither would my fancy go ?
 How out of place she makes
 The violet of a legend blow
 Among the chops and steaks !
 'Tis but a steward of the can,
 One shade more plump than common ;
 As just and mere a serving-man
 As any born of woman.

I ranged too high : what draws me down
 Into the common day ?
 Is it the weight of that half-crown,
 Which I shall have to pay ?
 For, something duller than at first,
 Nor wholly comfortable,
 I sit, my empty glass reversed,
 And thrumming on the table :

Half fearful that, with self at strife,
 I take myself to task ;
 Lost of the fulness of my life
 I leave an empty flask :
 For I had hope, by something rare,
 To prove myself a poet :
 But, while I plan and plan, my hair
 Is gray before I know it.

So fares it since the years began,
 Till they be gather'd up ;
 The truth, that flies the flowing can,
 Will haunt the vacant cup :

And others' follies teach us not,
 Nor much their wisdom teaches ;
 And most, of sterling worth, is what
 Our own experience preaches.

Ah, let the rusty theme alone !
 We know not what we know.
 But for my pleasant hour, 'tis gone ;
 'Tis gone, and let it go.
 'Tis gone : a thousand such have slept
 Away from my embraces,
 And fall'n into the dusty crypt
 Of darken'd forms and faces.

Go, therefore, thou ! thy betters went
 Long since, and came no more ;
 With peals of genial clamour sent
 From many a tavern-door,
 With twisted quirks and happy hits,
 From misty men of letters ;
 The tavern-hours of mighty wits—
 Thine elders and thy betters.

Hours, when the Poet's words and looks
 Had yet their native glow :
 Nor yet the fear of little books
 Had made him talk for show ;
 But, all his vast heart sherris-warm'd,
 He flash'd his random speeches,
 Ere days, that deal in ana, swarm'd
 His literary leeches.

So mix for ever with the past,
 Like all good things on earth !
 For should I prize thee, couldst thou
 last,
 At half thy real worth ?
 I hold it good, good things should pass :
 With time I will not quarrel :
 It is but yonder empty glass
 That makes me maudlin-moral.

Head-waiter of the chop-house here,
 To which I most resort,
 I too must part : I hold thee dear
 For this good pint of port.
 For this, thou shalt from all things suck
 Marrow of mirth and laughter ;
 And wheresoe'er thou move, good luck
 Shall fling her old shoe after.

But thou wilt never move from hence,
 The sphere thy fate allots :
 Thy latter days increased with pence
 Go down among the pots :
 Thou battenest by the greasy gleam
 In haunts of hungry sinners,
 Old boxes, larded with the steam
 Of thirty thousand dinners.

We fret, we fume, would shift our skins,
 Would quarrel with our lot ;
 Thy care is, under polish'd tins,
 To serve the hot-and-hot ;
 To come and go, and come again,
 Returning like the pewit,
 And watch'd by silent gentlemen,
 That trifle with the cruet.

Live long, ere from thy topmost head
 The thick-set hazel dies ;
 Long, ere the hateful crow shall tread
 The corners of thine eyes :
 Live long, nor feel in head or chest
 Our changeful equinoxes,
 Till mellow Death, like some late guest,
 Shall call thee from the boxes.

But when he calls, and thou shalt cease
 To pace the gritted floor,
 And, laying down an unctuous lease
 Of life, shalt earn no more ;
 No carved cross-bones, the types of Death,
 Shall show thee past to Heaven :
 But carved cross-pipes, and, underneath,
 A pint-pot neatly graven.

LADY CLARE

It was the time when lilies blow,
 And clouds are highest up in air,
 Lord Ronald brought a lily-white doe
 To give his cousin, Lady Clare.

I trow they did not part in scorn :
 Lovers long-betroth'd were they :
 They two will wed the morrow morn :
 God's blessing on the day !

'He does not love me for my birth,
 Nor for my lands so broad and fair ;
 He loves me for my own true worth,
 And that is well,' said Lady Clare.

In there came old Alice the nurse,
 Said, 'Who was this that went from
 thee ?'

'It was my cousin,' said Lady Clare,
 'To-morrow he weds with me.'

'O God be thank'd !' said Alice the
 nurse,

'That all comes round so just and fair :
 Lord Ronald is heir of all your lands,
 And you are *not* the Lady Clare.'

'Are ye out of your mind, my nurse,
 my nurse ?'

Said Lady Clare, 'that ye speak so
 wild ?'

'As God's above,' said Alice the nurse,
 'I speak the truth : you are my child.

'The old Earl's daughter died at my
 breast ;

I speak the truth, as I live by bread !
 I buried her like my own sweet child,
 And put my child in her stead.'

'Falsely, falsely have ye done,
 O mother,' she said, 'if this be true,
 To keep the best man under the sun
 So many years from his due.'

'Nay now, my child,' said Alice the
 nurse,

'But keep the secret for your life,
 And all you have will be Lord Ronald's,
 When you are man and wife.'

'If I'm a beggar born,' she said,
 'I will speak out, for I dare not lie.
 Pull off, pull off, the brooch of gold,
 And fling the diamond necklace by.'

'Nay now, my child,' said Alice the
 nurse,

'But keep the secret all ye can.'
 She said, 'Not so : but I will know
 If there be any faith in man.'

'Nay now, what faith ?' said Alice the
 nurse,

'The man will cleave unto his right.'
 'And he shall have it,' the lady replied,
 'Tho' I should die to-night.'

'Yet give one kiss to your mother dear !
 Alas, my child, I sinn'd for thee.'
 'O mother, mother, mother,' she said,
 'So strange it seems to me.

'Yet here's a kiss for my mother dear,
 My mother dear, if this be so,
 And lay your hand upon my head,
 And bless me, mother, ere I go.'

She clad herself in a russet gown,
 She was no longer Lady Clare :
 She went by dale, and she went by down,
 With a single rose in her hair.

The lily-white doe Lord Ronald had
 brought
 Leapt up from where she lay,
 Dropt her head in the maiden's hand,
 And follow'd her all the way.

Down stept Lord Ronald from his tower :
 'O Lady Clare, you shame your worth !
 Why come you drest like a village maid,
 That are the flower of the earth ?'

'If I come drest like a village maid,
 I am but as my fortunes are :
 I am a beggar born,' she said,
 'And not the Lady Clare.'

'Play me no tricks,' said Lord Ronald,
 'For I am yours in word and in deed.
 Play me no tricks,' said Lord Ronald,
 'Your riddle is hard to read.'

O and proudly stood she up !
 Her heart within her did not fail :
 She look'd into Lord Ronald's eyes,
 And told him all her nurse's tale.

He laugh'd a laugh of merry scorn :
 He turn'd and kiss'd her where she
 stood :

'If you are not the heiress born,
 And I,' said he, 'the next in blood—

'If you are not the heiress born,
 And I,' said he, 'the lawful heir,
 We two will wed to-morrow morn,
 And you shall still be Lady Clare.'

THE CAPTAIN

A LEGEND OF THE NAVY

HE that only rules by terror
 Doeth grievous wrong.
 Deep as Hell I count his error.
 Let him hear my song.
 Brave the Captain was : the seamen
 Made a gallant crew,
 Gallant sons of English freemen,
 Sailors bold and true.
 But they hated his oppression,
 Stern he was and rash ;
 So for every light transgression
 Doom'd them to the lash.
 Day by day more harsh and cruel
 Seem'd the Captain's mood.
 Secret wrath like smother'd fuel
 Burnt in each man's blood.
 Yet he hoped to purchase glory,
 Hoped to make the name
 Of his vessel great in story,
 Wheresoe'er he came.
 So they past by capes and islands,
 Many a harbour-mouth,
 Sailing under palmy highlands
 Far within the South.
 On a day when they were going
 O'er the lone expanse,
 In the north, her canvas flowing,
 Rose a ship of France.
 Then the Captain's colour heighten'd,
 Joyful came his speech :
 But a cloudy gladness lighten'd
 In the eyes of each.
 'Chase,' he said : the ship flew forward,
 And the wind did blow ;
 Stately, lightly, went she Norward,
 Till she near'd the foe.
 Then they look'd at him they hated,
 Had what they desired :
 Mute with folded arms they waited—
 Not a gun was fired.
 But they heard the foeman's thunder
 Roaring out, their doom ;
 All the air was torn in sunder,
 Crashing went the boom,

Spars were splinter'd, decks were shatter'd,
 Bullets fell like rain ;
 Over mast and deck were scatter'd
 Blood and brains of men.
 Spars were splinter'd ; decks were broken :
 Every mother's son—
 Down they dropt—no word was spoken—
 Each beside his gun.
 On the decks as they were lying,
 Were their faces grim.
 In their blood, as they lay dying,
 Did they smile on him.
 Those, in whom he had reliance
 For his noble name,
 With one smile of still defiance
 Sold him unto shame.
 Shame and wrath his heart confounded,
 Pale he turn'd and red,
 Till himself was deadly wounded
 Falling on the dead.
 Dismal error ! fearful slaughter !
 Years have wander'd by,
 Side by side beneath the water
 Crew and Captain lie ;
 There the sunlit ocean tosses
 O'er them mouldering,
 And the lonely seabird crosses
 With one waft of the wing.

THE LORD OF BURLEIGH

In her ear he whispers gaily,
 ' If my heart by signs can tell,
 Maiden, I have watch'd thee daily,
 And I think thou lov'st me well.'
 She replies, in accents fainter,
 ' There is none I love like thee.'
 He is but a landscape-painter,
 And a village maiden she.
 He to lips, that fondly falter,
 Presses his without reproof :
 Leads her to the village altar,
 And they leave her father's roof.
 ' I can make no marriage present :
 Little can I give my wife.
 Love will make our cottage pleasant,
 And I love thee more than life.'
 They by parks and lodges going
 See the lordly castles stand :

Summer woods, about them blowing,
 Made a murmur in the land.
 From deep thought himself he rouses,
 Says to her that loves him well,
 ' Let us see these handsome houses
 Where the wealthy nobles dwell.'
 So she goes by him attended,
 Hears him lovingly converse,
 Sees whatever fair and splendid
 Lay betwixt his home and hers ;
 Parks with oak and chestnut shady,
 Parks and order'd gardens great,
 Ancient homes of lord and lady,
 Built for pleasure and for state.
 All he shows her makes him dearer :
 Evermore she seems to gaze
 On that cottage growing nearer,
 Where they twain will spend their days.
 O but she will love him truly !
 He shall have a cheerful home ;
 She will order all things duly,
 When beneath his roof they come.
 Thus her heart rejoices greatly,
 Till a gateway she discerns
 With armorial bearings stately,
 And beneath the gate she turns ;
 Sees a mansion more majestic
 Than all those she saw before :
 Many a gallant gay domestic
 Bows before him at the door.
 And they speak in gentle murmur,
 When they answer to his call,
 While he treads with footstep firmer,
 Leading on from hall to hall.
 And, while now she wonders blindly,
 Nor the meaning can divine,
 Proudly turns he round and kindly,
 ' All of this is mine and thine.'
 Here he lives in state and bounty,
 Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,
 Not a lord in all the county
 Is so great a lord as he.
 All at once the colour flushes
 Her sweet face from brow to chin :
 As it were with shame she blushes,
 And her spirit changed within.
 Then her countenance all over
 Pale again as death did prove :
 But he clasp'd her like a lover,
 And he cheer'd her soul with love.

So she strove against her weakness,
 Tho' at times her spirit sank :
 Shaped her heart with woman's meekness
 To all duties of her rank :
 And a gentle consort made he,
 And her gentle mind was such
 That she grew a noble lady,
 And the people loved her much.
 But a trouble weigh'd upon her,
 And perplex'd her, night and morn,
 With the burthen of an honour
 Unto which she was not born.
 Faint she grew, and ever fainter,
 And she murmur'd, 'Oh, that he
 Were once more that landscape-painter,
 Which did win my heart from me !'
 So she droop'd and droop'd before him,
 Fading slowly from his side :
 Three fair children first she bore him,
 Then before her time she died.
 Weeping, weeping late and early,
 Walking up and pacing down,
 Deeply mourn'd the Lord of Burleigh,
 Burleigh-house by Stamford-town.
 And he came to look upon her,
 And he look'd at her and said,
 'Bring the dress and put it on her,
 That she wore when she was wed.'
 Then her people, softly treading,
 Bore to earth her body, drest
 In the dress that she was wed in,
 That her spirit might have rest.

THE VOYAGE

I

We left behind the painted buoy
 That tosses at the harbour-mouth ;
 And madly danced our hearts with joy,
 As fast we fled to the South :
 How fresh was every sight and sound
 On open main or winding shore !
 We knew the merry world was round,
 And we might sail for evermore.

II

Warm broke the breeze against the
 brow,
 Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail :

The Lady's-head upon the prow
 Caught the shrill salt, and sheer'd 'the
 gale.
 The broad seas swell'd to meet the keel,
 And swept behind ; so quick the run,
 We felt the good ship shake and reel,
 We seem'd to sail into the Sun !

III

How oft we saw the Sun retire,
 And burn the threshold of the night,
 Fall from his Ocean-lane of fire,
 And sleep beneath his pillar'd light !
 How oft the purple-skirted robe
 Of twilight slowly downward drawn,
 As thro' the slumber of the globe
 Again we dash'd into the dawn !

IV

New stars all night above the brim
 Of waters lighten'd into view ;
 They climb'd as quickly, for the rim
 Changed every moment as we flew.
 Far ran the naked moon across
 The houseless ocean's heaving field,
 Or flying shone, the silver boss
 Of her own halo's dusky shield ;

V

The peaky islet shifted shapes,
 High towns on hills were dimly seen,
 We past long lines of Northern capes
 And dewy Northern meadows green.
 We came to warmer waves, and deep
 Across the boundless east we drove,
 Where those long swells of breaker sweep
 The nutmeg rocks and isles of clove.

VI

By peaks that flamed, or, all in shade,
 Gloom'd the low coast and quivering
 brine
 With ashy rains, that spreading made
 Fantastic plume or sable pine ;
 By sands and steaming flats, and floods
 Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast,
 And hills and scarlet-mingled woods
 Glow'd for a moment as we past.

VII

O hundred shores of happy climes,
 How swiftly stream'd ye by the bark !
 At times the whole sea burn'd, at times
 With wakes of fire we tore the dark ;
 At times a carven craft would shoot
 From havens hid in fairy bowers,
 With naked limbs and flowers and fruit,
 But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

VIII

For one fair Vision ever fled
 Down the waste waters day and night,
 And still we follow'd where she led,
 In hope to gain upon her flight.
 Her face was evermore unseen,
 And fixt upon the far sea-line ;
 But each man murmur'd, 'O my Queen,
 I follow till I make thee mine.'

IX

And now we lost her, now she gleam'd
 Like Fancy made of golden air,
 Now nearer to the prow she seem'd
 Like Virtue firm, like Knowledge fair,
 Now high on waves that idly burst
 Like Heavenly Hope she crown'd the
 sea,
 And now, the bloodless point reversed,
 She bore the blade of Liberty.

X

And only one among us—him
 We pleased not—he was seldom
 pleased :
 He saw not far : his eyes were dim :
 But ours he swore were all diseased.
 'A ship of fools,' he shriek'd in spite,
 'A ship of fools,' he sneer'd and
 wept.
 And overboard one stormy night
 He cast his body, and on we swept.

XI

And never sail of ours was furl'd,
 Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn ;
 We lov'd the glories of the world,
 But laws of nature were our scorn.

For blasts would rise and rave and cease,
 But whence were those that drove the
 sail
 Across the whirlwind's heart of peace,
 And to and thro' the counter gale ?

XII

Again to colder climes we came,
 For still we follow'd where she led :
 Now mate is blind and captain lame,
 And half the crew are sick or dead,
 But, blind or lame or sick or sound,
 We follow that which flies before :
 We know the merry world is round,
 And we may sail for evermore.

SIR LAUNCELOT AND
QUEEN GUINEVERE

A FRAGMENT

LIKE souls that balance joy and pain,
 With tears and smiles from heaven again
 The maiden Spring upon the plain
 Came in a sun-lit fall of rain.

In crystal vapour everywhere
 Blue isles of heaven laugh'd between,
 And far, in forest-deeps unseen,
 The topmost elm-tree gather'd green
 From draughts of balmy air.

Sometimes the linnet piped his song :
 Sometimes the throstle whistled strong :
 Sometimes the sparrowhawk, wheel'd along,
 Hush'd all the groves from fear of wrong :

By grassy capes with fuller sound
 In curves the yellowing river ran,
 And drooping chestnut-buds began
 To spread into the perfect fan,
 Above the teeming ground.

Then, in the boyhood of the year,
 Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere
 Rode thro' the coverts of the deer,
 With blissful treble ringing clear.

She seem'd a part of joyous Spring :
 A gown of grass-green silk she wore,
 Buckled with golden clasps before ;
 A light-green tuft of plumes she bore
 Closed in a golden ring.

Now on some twisted ivy-net,
 Now by some tinkling rivulet,
 In mosses mixt with violet
 Her cream-white mule his pastern set :
 And fleeter now she skimm'd the
 plains
 Than she whose elfin prancer springs
 By night to eery warblings,
 When all the glimmering moorland rings
 With jingling bridle-reins.

As fast she fled thro' sun and shade,
 The happy winds upon her play'd,
 Blowing the ringlet from the braid :
 She look'd so lovely, as she sway'd
 The rein with dainty finger-tips,
 A man had given all other bliss,
 And all his worldly worth for this,
 To waste his whole heart in one kiss
 Upon her perfect lips.

A FAREWELL

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
 Thy tribute wave deliver :
 No more by thee my steps shall be,
 For ever and for ever.

Flow, softly flow, by lawn and lea,
 A rivulet then a river :
 No where by thee my steps shall be,
 For ever and for ever.

But here will sigh thine alder tree,
 And here thine aspen shiver ;
 And here by thee will hum the bee,
 For ever and for ever.

A thousand suns will stream on thee,
 A thousand moons will quiver ;
 But not by thee my steps shall be,
 For ever and for ever.

THE BEGGAR MAID

HER arms across her breast she laid ;
 She was more fair than words can say :
 Bare-footed came the beggar maid
 Before the king Cophetua.

In robe and crown the king stept down,
 To meet and greet her on her way ;
 'It is no wonder,' said the lords,
 'She is more beautiful than day.'

As shines the moon in clouded skies,
 She in her poor attire was seen :
 One praised her ancles, one her eyes,
 One her dark hair and lovesome mien.
 So sweet a face, such angel grace,
 In all that land had never been :
 Cophetua sware a royal oath :
 'This beggar maid shall be my queen !'

THE EAGLE

FRAGMENT

HE clasps the crag with crooked hands ;
 Close to the sun in lonely lands,
 Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls ;
 He watches from his mountain walls,
 And like a thunderbolt he falls.

MOVE eastward, happy earth, and leave
 Yon orange sunset waning slow :
 From fringes of the faded eve,
 O, happy planet, eastward go ;
 Till over thy dark shoulder glow
 Thy silver sister-world, and rise
 To glass herself in dewy eyes
 That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
 Dip forward under starry light,
 And move me to my marriage-morn,
 And round again to happy night.

COME not, when I am dead,
 To drop thy foolish tears upon my
 grave,
 To trample round my fallen head,
 And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst
 not save.
 There let the wind sweep and the plover
 cry ;
 But thou, go by.

Child, if it were thine error or thy crime
 I care no longer, being all unblest :
 Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of
 Time,
 And I desire to rest.
 Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where
 I lie :
 Go by, go by.

THE LETTERS

I

STILL on the tower stood the vane,
 A black yew gloom'd the stagnant air,
 I peer'd athwart the chancel pane
 And saw the altar cold and bare.
 A clog of lead was round my feet,
 A band of pain across my brow ;
 'Cold altar, Heaven and earth shall meet
 Before you hear my marriage vow.'

II

I turn'd and humm'd a bitter song
 That mock'd the wholesome human
 heart,
 And then we met in wrath and wrong,
 We met, but only meant to part.
 Full cold my greeting was and dry ;
 She faintly smiled, she hardly moved ;
 I saw with half-unconscious eye
 She wore the colours I approved.

III

She took the little ivory chest,
 With half a sigh she turn'd the key,
 Then raised her head with lips compress'd,
 And gave my letters back to me.
 And gave the trinkets and the rings,
 My gifts, when gifts of mine could
 please ;
 As looks a father on the things
 Of his dead son, I look'd on these.

IV

She told me all her friends had said ;
 I raged against the public liar ;
 She talk'd as if her love were dead,
 But in my words were seeds of fire.

'No more of love ; your sex is known :
 I never will be twice deceived.
 Henceforth I trust the man alone,
 The woman cannot be believed.

V

'Thro' slander, meanest spawn of Hell—
 And women's slander is the worst,
 And you, whom once I lov'd so well,
 Thro' you, my life will be accurst.'
 I spoke with heart, and heat and force,
 I shook her breast with vague alarms—
 Like torrents from a mountain source
 We rush'd into each other's arms.

VI

We parted : sweetly gleam'd the stars,
 And sweet the vapour-braided blue,
 Low breezes fann'd the belfry bars,
 As homeward by the church I drew.
 The very graves appear'd to smile,
 So fresh they rose in shadow'd swells ;
 'Dark porch,' I said, 'and silent aisle,
 There comes a sound of marriage bells.'

THE VISION OF SIN

I

I HAD a vision when the night was late :
 A youth came riding toward a palace-gate.
 He rode a horse with wings, that would
 have flown,
 But that his heavy rider kept him down.
 And from the palace came a child of sin,
 And took him by the curls, and led him in,
 Where sat a company with heated eyes,
 Expecting when a fountain should arise :
 A sleepy light upon their brows and lips—
 As when the sun, a crescent of eclipse,
 Dreams over lake and lawn, and isles and
 capes—
 Suffused them, sitting, lying, languid
 shapes,
 By heaps of gourds, and skins of wine,
 and piles of grapes.

II

Then methought I heard a mellow sound,
 Gathering up from all the lower ground ;

Narrowing in to where they sat assembled
 Low voluptuous music winding trembled,
 Wov'n in circles : they that heard it sigh'd,
 Panted hand-in-hand with faces pale,
 Swung themselves, and in low tones replied ;

Till the fountain spouted, showering wide
 Sleet of diamond-drift and pearly hail ;
 Then the music touch'd the gates and died ;
 Rose again from where it seem'd to fail,
 Storm'd in orbs of song, a growing gale ;
 Till thronging in and in, to where they waited,

As 'twere a hundred-throated nightingale,
 The strong tempestuous treble throbb'd
 and palpitated ;

Ran into its giddiest whirl of sound,
 Caught the sparkles, and in circles,
 Purple gauzes, golden hazes, liquid mazes,
 Flung the torrent rainbow round :
 Then they started from their places,
 Moved with violence, changed in hue,
 Caught each other with wild grimaces,
 Half-invisible to the view,
 Wheeling with precipitate paces
 To the melody, till they flew,
 Hair, and eyes, and limbs, and faces,
 Twisted hard in fierce embraces,
 Like to Furies, like to Graces,
 Dash'd together in blinding dew :
 Till, kill'd with some luxurious agony,
 The nerve-dissolving melody
 Flutter'd headlong from the sky.

III

And then I look'd up toward a mountain-tract,

That girt the region with high cliff and lawn :

I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
 Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
 God made Himself an awful rose of dawn,
 Unheeded : and detaching, fold by fold,
 From those still heights, and, slowly
 drawing near,

A vapour heavy, hueless, formless, cold,
 Came floating on for many a month and year,

Unheeded : and I thought I would have spoken,

And warn'd that madman ere it grew too late :

But, as in dreams, I could not. Mine was broken,

When that cold vapour touch'd the palace gate,

And link'd again. I saw within my head
 A gray and gap-tooth'd man as lean as death,

Who slowly rode across a wither'd heath,
 And lighted at a ruin'd inn, and said :

IV

' Wrinkled ostler, grim and thin !

Here is custom come your way ;
 Take my brute, and lead him in,
 Stuff his ribs with mouldy hay.

' Bitter barmaid, waning fast !

See that sheets are on my bed ;
 What ! the flower of life is past :
 It is long before you wed.

' Slip-shod waiter, lank and sour,
 At the Dragon on the heath !

Let us have a quiet hour,
 Let us hob-and-nob with Death.

' I am old, but let me drink ;

Bring me spices, bring me wine ;
 I remember, when I think,
 That my youth was half divine.

' Wine is good for shrivell'd lips,
 When a blanket wraps the day,
 When the rotten woodland drips,
 And the leaf is stamp'd in clay.

' Sit thee down, and have no shame,
 Cheek by jowl, and knee by knee :
 What care I for any name ?
 What for order or degree ?

' Let me screw thee up a peg :
 Let me loose thy tongue with wine :
 Callest thou that thing a leg ?
 Which is thinnest ? thine or mine ?

' Thou shalt not be saved by works :
 Thou hast been a sinner too :
 Ruin'd trunks on wither'd forks,
 Empty scarecrows, I and you !

' Fill the cup, and fill the can :
Have a rouse before the morn :
Every moment dies a man,
Every moment one is born.

' We are men of ruin'd blood ;
Therefore comes it we are wise.
Fish are we that love the mud,
Rising to no fancy-flies.

' Name and fame ! to fly sublime
Thro' the courts, the camps, the
schools,
Is to be the ball of Time,
Banded by the hands of fools.

' Friendship !—to be two in one—
Let the canting liar pack !
Well I know, when I am gone,
How she mouths behind my back.

' Virtue !—to be good and just—
Every heart, when sifted well,
Is a clot of warmer dust,
Mix'd with cunning sparks of hell.

' O ! we two as well can look
Whited thought and cleanly life
As the priest, above his book
Leering at his neighbour's wife.

' Fill the cup, and fill the can :
Have a rouse before the morn :
Every moment dies a man,
Every moment one is born.

' Drink, and let the parties rave :
They are fill'd with idle spleen ;
Rising, falling, like a wave,
For they know not what they mean.

' He that roars for liberty
Faster binds a tyrant's power ;
And the tyrant's cruel glee
Forces on the freer hour.

' Fill the can, and fill the cup :
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

' Greet her with applausive breath,
Freedom, gaily doth she tread ;
In her right a civic wreath,
In her left a human head.

' No, I love not what is new ;
She is of an ancient house :
And I think we know the hue
Of that cap upon her brows.

' Let her go ! her thirst she slakes
Where the bloody conduit runs,
Then her sweetest meal she makes
On the first-born of her sons.

' Drink to lofty hopes that cool—
Visions of a perfect State :
Drink we, last, the public fool,
Frantic love and frantic hate.

' Chant me now some wicked stave,
Till thy drooping courage rise,
And the glow-worm of the grave
Glimmer in thy rheumy eyes.

' Fear not thou to loose thy tongue ;
Set thy hoary fancies free ;
What is loathsome to the young
Savours well to thee and me.

' Change, reverting to the years,
When thy nerves could understand
What there is in loving tears,
And the warmth of hand in hand.

' Tell me tales of thy first love—
April hopes, the fools of chance ;
Till the graves begin to move,
And the dead begin to dance.

' Fill the can, and fill the cup :
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

' Trooping from their mouldy dens
The chap-fallen circle spreads :
Welcome, fellow-citizens,
Hollow hearts and empty heads !

'You are bones, and what of that ?
Every face, however full,
Padded round with flesh and fat,
Is but modell'd on a skull.

'Death is king, and Vivat Rex !
Tread a measure on the stones,
Madam—if I know your sex,
From the fashion of your bones.

'No, I cannot praise the fire
In your eye—nor yet your lip :
All the more do I admire
Joints of cunning workmanship.

'Lo ! God's likeness—the ground-plan—
Neither modell'd, glazed, nor framed :
Buss me, thou rough sketch of man,
Far too naked to be shamed !

'Drink to Fortune, drink to Chance,
While we keep a little breath !
Drink to heavy Ignorance !
Hob-and-nob with brother Death !

'Thou art mazed, the night is long,
And the longer night is near :
What ! I am not all as wrong
As a bitter jest is dear.

'Youthful hopes, by scores, to all,
When the locks are crisp and curl'd ;
Unto me my maudlin gall
And my mockeries of the world.

'Fill the cup, and fill the can :
Mingle madness, mingle scorn !
Dregs of life, and lees of man :
Yet we will not die forlorn.'

v

The voice grew faint : there came a
further change :
Once more uprose the mystic mountain-
range :
Below were men and horses pierced with
worms,
And slowly quickening into lower forms ;
By shards and scurf of salt, and scum of
dross,
Old splash of rains, and refuse patch'd
with moss.

Then some one spake : 'Behold ! it was
a crime
Of sense avenged by sense that wore with
time.'

Another said : 'The crime of sense
became
The crime of malice, and is equal blame.'
And one : 'He had not wholly quench'd
his power ;
A little grain of conscience made him
sour.'

At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, 'Is there any hope ?'
To which an answer peal'd from that high
land,

But in a tongue no man could understand ;
And on the glimmering limit far with-
drawn

God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

TO —

AFTER READING A LIFE AND LETTERS

'Cursed be he that moves my bones.'
Shakespeare's Epitaph.

You might have won the Poet's name,
If such be worth the winning now,
And gain'd a laurel for your brow
Of sounder leaf than I can claim ;

But you have made the wiser choice,
A life that moves to gracious ends
Thro' troops of unrecording friends,
A deedful life, a silent voice :

And you have miss'd the irreverent doom
Of those that wear the Poet's crown :
Hereafter, neither knave nor clown
Shall hold their orgies at your tomb.

For now the Poet cannot die,
Nor leave his music as of old,
But round him ere he scarce be cold
Begins the scandal and the cry :

'Proclaim the faults he would not show :
Break lock and seal : betray the trust :
Keep nothing sacred : 'tis but just
The many-headed beast should know.'

Ah shameless ! for he did but sing
 A song that pleased us from its worth ;
 No public life was his on earth,
 No blazon'd statesman he, nor king.

He gave the people of his best :
 His worst he kept, his best he gave.
 My Shakespeare's curse on clown and
 knave
 Who will not let his ashes rest !

Who make it seem more sweet to be
 The little life of bank and brier,
 The bird that pipes his lone desire
 And dies unheard within his tree,

Than he that warbles long and loud
 And drops at Glory's temple-gates,
 For whom the carrion vulture waits
 To tear his heart before the crowd !

TO E. L., ON HIS TRAVELS IN GREECE

ILLYRIAN woodlands, echoing falls
 Of water, sheets of summer glass,
 The long divine Peneian pass,
 The vast Akrokeraunian walls,

Tomohrit, Athos, all things fair,
 With such a pencil, such a pen,
 You shadow forth to distant men,
 I read and felt that I was there :

And trust me while I turn'd the page,
 And track'd you still on classic ground,
 I grew in gladness till I found
 My spirits in the golden age.

For me the torrent ever pour'd
 And glisten'd—here and there alone
 The broad-limb'd Gods at random
 thrown
 By fountain-urns ;—and Naiads oar'd

A glimmering shoulder under gloom
 Of cavern pillars ; on the swell
 The silver lily heaved and fell ;
 And many a slope was rich in bloom

From him that on the mountain lea
 By dancing rivulets fed his flocks
 To him who sat upon the rocks,
 And fluted to the morning sea.

BREAK, break, break,
 On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !
 And I would that my tongue could utter
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
 That he shouts with his sister at play !
 O well for the sailor lad,
 That he sings in his boat on the bay !

And the stately ships go on
 To their haven under the hill ;
 But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
 And the sound of a voice that is still !

Break, break, break,
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead
 Will never come back to me.

THE POET'S SONG

THE rain had fallen, the Poet arose,
 He pass'd by the town and out of the
 street,
 A light wind blew from the gates of the
 sun,
 And waves of shadow went over the
 wheat,
 And he sat him down in a lonely place,
 And chanted a melody loud and sweet,
 That made the wild-swan pause in her
 cloud,
 And the lark drop down at his feet.

The swallow stopt as he hunted the fly,
 The snake slipt under a spray,
 The wild hawk stood with the down on
 his beak,
 And stared, with his foot on the prey,
 And the nightingale thought, 'I have
 sung many songs,
 But never a one so gay,
 For he sings of what the world will be
 When the years have died away.'

ENOCH ARDEN

AND OTHER POEMS

ENOCH ARDEN

LONG lines of cliff breaking have left a
chasm ;
And in the chasm are foam and yellow
sands ;
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf
In cluster ; then a moulder'd church ; and
higher
A long street climbs to one tall-tower'd
mill ;
And high in heaven behind it a gray down
With Danish barrows ; and a hazelwood,
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down.

Here on this beach a hundred years ago,
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,
The prettiest little damsel in the port,
And Philip Ray the miller's only son,
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's lad
Made orphan by a wintershipwreck, play'd
Among the waste and lumber of the shore,
Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing-nets,
Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats up-
drawn ;
And built their castles of dissolving sand
To watch them overflow'd, or following up
And flying the white breaker, daily left
The little footprint daily wash'd away.

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff :
In this the children play'd at keeping
house.

Enoch was host one day, Philip the next,
While Annie still was mistress ; but at
times

Enoch would hold possession for a week :
'This is my house and this my little wife.'
'Mine too' said Philip 'turn and turn
about :'

When, if they quarrell'd, Enoch stronger-
made

Was master : then would Philip, his blue
eyes
All flooded with the helpless wrath of
tears,
Shriek out 'I hate you, Enoch,' and at
this
The little wife would weep for company,
And pray them not to quarrel for her
sake,
And say she would be little wife to both.

But when the dawn of rosy childhood
past,
And the new warmth of life's ascending
sun

Was felt by either, either fixt his heart
On that one girl ; and Enoch spoke his
love,

But Philip loved in silence ; and the girl
Seem'd kinder unto Philip than to him ;
But she loved Enoch ; tho' she knew it
not,

And would if ask'd deny it. Enoch set
A purpose evermore before his eyes,
To hoard all savings to the uttermost,
To purchase his own boat, and make a
home

For Annie : and so prosper'd that at last
A luckier or a bolder fisherman,
A carefuller in peril, did not breathe
For leagues along that breaker-beaten
coast

Than Enoch. Likewise had he served a
year

On board a merchantman, and made
himself

Full sailor ; and he thrice had pluck'd a
life

From the dread sweep of the down-stream-
ing seas :

And all men look'd upon him favourably :
And ere he touch'd his one-and-twentieth
May

He purchased his own boat, and made a
home
For Annie, neat and nestlike, halfway up
The narrow street that clamber'd toward
the mill.

Then, on a golden autumn eventide,
The younger people making holiday,
With bag and sack and basket, great and
small,
Went nutting to the hazels. Philip stay'd
(His father lying sick and needing him)
An hour behind ; but as he climb'd the hill,
Just where the prone edge of the wood
began

To feather toward the hollow, saw the
pair,

Enoch and Annie, sitting hand-in-hand,
His large gray eyes and weather-beaten
face

All-kindled by a still and sacred fire,
That burn'd as on an altar. Philip look'd,
And in their eyes and faces read his doom ;
Then, as their faces drew together,
groan'd,

And slipt aside, and like a wounded life
Crept down into the hollows of the wood ;
There, while the rest were loud in merry-
making,

Had his dark hour unseen, and rose and
past

Bearing a lifelong hunger in his heart.

So these were wed, and merrily rang
the bells,

And merrily ran the years, seven happy
years,

Seven happy years of health and com-
petence,

And mutual love and honourable toil ;
With children ; first a daughter. In him
woke,

With his first babe's first cry, the noble
wish

To save all earnings to the uttermost,
And give his child a better bringing-up
Than his had been, or hers ; a wish re-
new'd,

When two years after came a boy to be
The rosy idol of her solitudes,

While Enoch was abroad on wrathful seas,
Or often journeying landward ; for in truth
Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean-
spoil

In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,
Rough-redden'd with a thousand winter
gales,

Not only to the market-cross were known,
But in the leafy lanes behind the down,
Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,
And peacock-yewtree of the lonely Hall,
Whose Friday fare was Enoch's minister-
ing.

Then came a change, as all things
human change.

Ten miles to northward of the narrow port
Open'd a larger haven : thither used
Enoch at times to go by land or sea ;
And once when there, and clambering on
a mast

In harbour, by mischance he slipt and
fell :

A limb was broken when they lifted
him ;

And while he lay recovering there, his
wife

Bore him another son, a sickly one :
Another hand crept too across his trade
Taking her bread and theirs : and on him
fell,

Altho' a grave and staid God-fearing
man,

Yet lying thus inactive, doubt and gloom.
He seem'd, as in a nightmare of the night,
To see his children leading evermore
Low miserable lives of hand-to-mouth,
And her, he loved, a beggar : then he
pray'd

'Save them from this, whatever comes to
me.'

And while he pray'd, the master of that
ship

Enoch had served in, hearing his mis-
chance,

Came, for he knew the man and valued
him,

Reporting of his vessel China-bound,
And wanting yet a boatswain. Would
he go ?

There yet were many weeks before she
sail'd,
Sail'd from this port. Would Enoch
have the place?
And Enoch all at once assented to it,
Rejoicing at that answer to his prayer.

So now that shadow of mischance
appear'd
No graver than as when some little cloud
Cuts off the fiery highway of the sun,
And isles a light in the offing: yet the
wife—
When he was gone—the children—what
to do?
Then Enoch lay long-pondering on his
plans;
To sell the boat—and yet he loved her
well—
How many a rough sea had he weather'd
in her!
He knew her, as a horseman knows his
horse—
And yet to sell her—then with what she
brought
Buy goods and stores—set Annie forth
in trade
With all that seamen needed or their
wives—
So might she keep the house while he
was gone.
Should he not trade himself out yonder?
go
This voyage more than once? yea twice
or thrice—
As oft as needed—last, returning rich,
Become the master of a larger craft,
With fuller profits lead an easier life,
Have all his pretty young ones educated,
And pass his days in peace among his
own.

Thus Enoch in his heart determined all:
Then moving homeward came on Annie
pale,
Nursing the sickly babe, her latest-born.
Forward she started with a happy cry,
And laid the feeble infant in his arms;
Whom Enoch took, and handled all his
limbs,

Appraised his weight and fondled father-
like,
But had no heart to break his purposes
To Annie, till the morrow, when he spoke.

Then first since Enoch's golden ring
had girt
Her finger, Annie fought against his will:
Yet not with brawling opposition she,
But manifold entreaties, many a tear,
Many a sad kiss by day by night renew'd
(Sure that all evil would come out of it)
Besought him, supplicating, if he cared
For her or his dear children, not to go.
He not for his own self caring but her,
Her and her children, let her plead in vain;
So grieving held his will, and bore it thro'.

For Enoch parted with his old sea-
friend,
Bought Annie goods and stores, and set
his hand
To fit their little streetward sitting-room
With shelf and corner for the goods and
stores.
So all day long till Enoch's last at home,
Shaking their pretty cabin, hammer and
axe,
Auger and saw, while Annie seem'd to
hear
Her own death-scaffold raising, shrill'd
and rang,
Till this was ended, and his careful
hand,—
The space was narrow,—having order'd
all
Almost as neat and close as Nature packs
Her blossom or her seedling, paused;
and he,
Who needs would work for Annie to the
last,
Ascending tired, heavily slept till morn.

And Enoch faced this morning of fare-
well
Brightly and boldly. All his Annie's fears,
Save, as his Annie's, were a laughter to
him.
Yet Enoch as a brave God-fearing man
Bow'd himself down, and in that mystery

Where God-in-man is one with man-in-God,

Pray'd for a blessing on his wife and babes
Whatever came to him : and then he said
'Annie, this voyage by the grace of God
Will bring fair weather yet to all of us.
Keep a clean hearth and a clear fire for me,
For I'll be back, my girl, before you
know it.'

Then lightly rocking baby's cradle 'and he,

This pretty, puny, weakly little one,—
Nay—for I love him all the better for it—
God bless him, he shall sit upon my knees
And I will tell him tales of foreign parts,
And make him merry, when I come home
again.

Come, Annie, come, cheer up before I go.'

Him running on thus hopefully she heard,

And almost hoped herself ; but when he turn'd

The current of his talk to graver things
In sailor fashion roughly sermonizing
On providence and trust in Heaven, she heard,

Heard and not heard him ; as the village girl,

Who sets her pitcher underneath the spring,

Musing on him that used to fill it for her,
Hears and not hears, and lets it overflow.

At length she spoke 'O Enoch, you are wise ;

And yet for all your wisdom well know I
That I shall look upon your face no more.'

'Well then,' said Enoch, 'I shall look on yours.

Annie, the ship I sail in passes here
(He named the day) get you a seaman's glass,

Spy out my face, and laugh at all your fears.'

But when the last of those last moments came,

'Annie, my girl, cheer up, be comforted,
Look to the babes, and till I come again

Keep everything shipshape, for I must go.
And fear no more for me ; or if you fear
Cast all your cares on God ; that anchor holds.

Is He not yonder in those uttermost
Parts of the morning ? if I flee to these
Can I go from Him ? and the sea is His,
The sea is His : He made it.'

Enoch rose,
Cast his strong arms about his drooping wife,

And kiss'd his wonder-stricken little ones ;
But for the third, the sickly one, who slept
After a night of feverous wakefulness,
When Annie would have raised him
Enoch said

'Wake him not ; let him sleep ; how should the child

Remember this ?' and kiss'd him in his cot.

But Annie from her baby's forehead clipt
A tiny curl, and gave it : this he kept
Thro' all his future ; but now hastily caught

His bundle, waved his hand, and went his way.

She when the day, that Enoch mention'd, came,

Borrow'd a glass, but all in vain : perhaps
She could not fix the glass to suit her eye ;
Perhaps her eye was dim, hand tremulous ;
She saw him not : and while he stood on deck

Waving, the moment and the vessel past.

Ev'n to the last dip of the vanishing sail
She watch'd it, and departed weeping for him ;

Then, tho' she mourn'd his absence as his grave,

Set her sad will no less to chime with his,
But throve not in her trade, not being bred
To barter, nor compensating the want
By shrewdness, neither capable of lies,
Nor asking overmuch and taking less,
And still foreboding 'what would Enoch say ?'

For more than once, in days of difficulty

And pressure, had she sold her wares for less
Than what she gave in buying what she sold :
She fail'd and sadden'd knowing it ; and thus,
Expectant of that news which never came,
Gain'd for her own a scanty sustenance,
And lived a life of silent melancholy.

Now the third child was sickly-born and grew
Yet sicklier, tho' the mother cared for it
With all a mother's care : nevertheless,
Whether her business often call'd her from it,
Or thro' the want of what it needed most,
Or means to pay the voice who best could tell
What most it needed—howsoe'er it was,
After a lingering,—ere she was aware,—
Like the caged bird escaping suddenly,
The little innocent soul flitted away.

In that same week when Annie buried it,
Philip's true heart, which hunger'd for her peace
(Since Enoch left he had not look'd upon her),
Smote him, as having kept aloof so long.
'Surely,' said Philip, 'I may see her now,
May be some little comfort ;' therefore went,
Past thro' the solitary room in front,
Paused for a moment at an inner door,
Then struck it thrice, and, no one opening,
Enter'd ; but Annie, seated with her grief,
Fresh from the burial of her little one,
Cared not to look on any human face,
But turn'd her own toward the wall and wept.
Then Philip standing up said falteringly
'Annie, I came to ask a favour of you.'

He spoke ; the passion in her moan'd reply
'Favour from one so sad and so forlorn
As I am !' half abash'd him ; yet unask'd,
His bashfulness and tenderness at war,
He set himself beside her, saying to her :

'I came to speak to you of what he wish'd,
Enoch, your husband : I have ever said
You chose the best among us—a strong man :
For where he fixt his heart he set his hand
To do the thing he will'd, and bore it thro'.
And wherefore did he go this weary way,
And leave you lonely ? not to see the world—
For pleasure ?—nay, but for the where-withal
To give his babes a better bringing-up
Than his had been, or yours : that was his wish.
And if he come again, vext will he be
To find the precious morning hours were lost.
And it would vex him even in his grave,
If he could know his babes were running wild
Like colts about the waste. So, Annie, now—
Have we not known each other all our lives ?
I do beseech you by the love you bear
Him and his children not to say me nay—
For, if you will, when Enoch comes again
Why then he shall repay me—if you will,
Annie—for I am rich and well-to-do.
Now let me put the boy and girl to school :
This is the favour that I came to ask.'

Then Annie with her brows against the wall
Answer'd 'I cannot look you in the face ;
I seem so foolish and so broken down.
When you came in my sorrow broke me down ;
And now I think your kindness breaks me down ;
But Enoch lives ; that is borne in on me :
He will repay you : money can be repaid ;
Not kindness such as yours.'

And Philip ask'd
'Then you will let me, Annie ?'

There she turn'd,
She rose, and fixt her swimming eyes upon him,

And dwelt a moment on his kindly face,
 Then calling down a blessing on his head
 Caught at his hand, and wrung it passion-
 ately,
 And past into the little garth beyond.
 So lifted up in spirit he moved away.

Then Philip put the boy and girl to
 school,
 And bought them needful books, and
 everyway,
 Like one who does his duty by his own,
 Made himself theirs ; and tho' for Annie's
 sake,
 Fearing the lazy gossip of the port,
 He oft denied his heart his dearest wish,
 And seldom crost her threshold, yet he
 sent
 Gifts by the children, garden-herbs and
 fruit,
 The late and early roses from his wall,
 Or conies from the down, and now and
 then,
 With some pretext of fineness in the meal
 To save the offence of charitable, flour
 From his tall mill that whistled on the
 waste.

But Philip did not fathom Annie's
 mind :
 Scarce could the woman when he came
 upon her,
 Out of full heart and boundless gratitude
 Light on a broken word to thank him
 with.
 But Philip was her children's all-in-all ;
 From distant corners of the street they
 ran
 To greet his hearty welcome heartily ;
 Lords of his house and of his mill were
 they ;
 Worried his passive ear with petty wrongs
 Or pleasures, hung upon him, play'd with
 him
 And call'd him Father Philip. Philip
 gain'd
 As Enoch lost ; for Enoch seem'd to them
 Uncertain as a vision or a dream,
 Faint as a figure seen in early dawn
 Down at the far end of an avenue,

Going we know not where : and so ten
 years,
 Since Enoch left his hearth and native
 land,
 Fled forward, and no news of Enoch
 came.

It chanced one evening Annie's children
 long'd
 To go with others, nutting to the wood,
 And Annie would go with them ; then
 they begg'd
 For Father Philip (as they call'd him) too :
 Him, like the working bee in blossom-
 dust,
 Blanch'd with his mill, they found ; and
 saying to him
 ' Come with us Father Philip ' he denied ;
 But when the children pluck'd at him to
 go,
 He laugh'd, and yielded readily to their
 wish,
 For was not Annie with them ? and they
 went.

But after scaling half the weary down,
 Just where the prone edge of the wood
 began
 To feather toward the hollow, all her force
 Fail'd her ; and sighing, ' Let me rest ' she
 said :
 So Philip rested with her well-content ;
 While all the younger ones with jubilant
 cries
 Broke from their elders, and tumultuously
 Down thro' the whitening hazels made a
 plunge
 To the bottom, and dispersed, and bent
 or broke
 The lithe reluctant boughs to tear away
 Their tawny clusters, crying to each other
 And calling, here and there, about the
 wood.

But Philip sitting at her side forgot
 Her presence, and remember'd one dark
 hour
 Here in this wood, when like a wounded
 life
 He crept into the shadow : at last he said,

Lifting his honest forehead, 'Listen,
Annie,
How merry they are down yonder in the
wood.
Tired, Annie?' for she did not speak a
word.
'Tired?' but her face had fall'n upon her
hands;
At which, as with a kind of anger in him,
'The ship was lost,' he said, 'the ship
was lost!
No more of that! why should you kill
yourself
And make them orphans quite?' And
Annie said
'I thought not of it: but—I know not
why—
Their voices make me feel so solitary.'

Then Philip coming somewhat closer
spoke.
'Annie, there is a thing upon my mind,
And it has been upon my mind so long,
That tho' I know not when it first came
there,
I know that it will out at last. O Annie,
It is beyond all hope, against all chance,
That he who left you ten long years ago
Should still be living; well then—let me
speak:
I grieve to see you poor and wanting help:
I cannot help you as I wish to do
Unless—they say that women are so
quick—
Perhaps you know what I would have
you know—
I wish you for my wife. I fain would
prove
A father to your children: I do think
They love me as a father: I am sure
That I love them as if they were mine
own;
And I believe, if you were fast my wife,
That after all these sad uncertain years,
We might be still as happy as God
grants
To any of his creatures. Think upon it:
For I am well-to-do—no kin, no care,
No burthen, save my care for you and
yours:

And we have known each other all our
lives,
And I have loved you longer than you
know.'

Then answer'd Annie; tenderly she
spoke:
'You have been as God's good angel in
our house.
God bless you for it, God reward you for
it,
Philip, with something happier than my-
self.
Can one love twice? can you be ever
loved
As Enoch was? what is it that you ask?'
'I am content' he answer'd 'to be loved
A little after Enoch.' 'O' she cried,
Scared as it were, 'dear Philip, wait a
while:
If Enoch comes—but Enoch will not
come—
Yet wait a year, a year is not so long:
Surely I shall be wiser in a year:
O wait a little!' Philip sadly said
'Annie, as I have waited all my life
I well may wait a little.' 'Nay' she
cried
'I am bound: you have my promise—in
a year:
Will you not bide your year as I bide
mine?'
And Philip answer'd 'I will bide my
year.'

Here both were mute, till Philip
glancing up
Beheld the dead flame of the fallen day
Pass from the Danish barrow overhead;
Then fearing night and chill for Annie,
rose
And sent his voice beneath him thro' the
wood.
Up came the children laden with their
spoil;
Then all descended to the port, and there
At Annie's door he paused and gave his
hand,
Saying gently 'Annie, when I spoke to
you,

That was your hour of weakness. I was
wrong,
I am always bound to you, but you are
free.'
Then Annie weeping answer'd 'I am
bound.'

She spoke ; and in one moment as it
were,
While yet she went about her household
ways,

Ev'n as she dwelt upon his latest words,
That he had loved her longer than she
knew,

That autumn into autumn flash'd again,
And there he stood once more before her
face,

Claiming her promise. 'Is it a year?'
she ask'd.

'Yes, if the nuts' he said 'be ripe again :
Come out and see.' But she—she put
him off—

So much to look to—such a change—a
month—

Give her a month—she knew that she was
bound—

A month—no more. Then Philip with
his eyes

Full of that lifelong hunger, and his voice
Shaking a little like a drunkard's hand,
'Take your own time, Annie, take your
own time.'

And Annie could have wept for pity of
him ;

And yet she held him on delayingly
With many a scarce-believable excuse,
Trying his truth and his long-sufferance,
Till half-another year had slipt away.

By this the lazy gossips of the port,
Abhorrent of a calculation crost,
Began to chafe as at a personal wrong.
Some thought that Philip did but trifle
with her ;

Some that she but held off to draw him on ;
And others laugh'd at her and Philip too,
As simple folk that knew not their own
minds,

And one, in whom all evil fancies clung
Like serpent eggs together, laughingly

Would hint at worse in either. Her own
son

Was silent, tho' he often look'd his wish ;
But evermore the daughter prest upon her
To wed the man so dear to all of them
And lift the household out of poverty ;
And Philip's rosy face contracting grew
Careworn and wan ; and all these things
fell on her
Sharp as reproach.

At last one night it chanced
That Annie could not sleep, but earnestly
Pray'd for a sign 'my Enoch is he gone?'
Then compass'd round by the blind wall
of night

Brook'd not the expectant terror of her
heart,

Started from bed, and struck herself a
light,

Then desperately seized the holy Book,
Suddenly set it wide to find a sign,
Suddenly put her finger on the text,
'Under the palm-tree.' That was nothing
to her :

No meaning there : she closed the Book
and slept :

When lo ! her Enoch sitting on a height,
Under a palm-tree, over him the Sun :
'He is gone,' she thought, 'he is happy,
he is singing

Hosanna in the highest : yonder shines
The Sun of Righteousness, and these be
palms

Whereof the happy people strowing cried
"Hosanna in the highest !" Here she
woke,

Resolved, sent for him and said wildly to
him

'There is no reason why we should not
wed.'

'Then for God's sake,' he answer'd, 'both
our sakes,

So you will wed me, let it be at once.'

So these were wed and merrily rang the
bells,

Merrily rang the bells and they were wed.
But never merrily beat Annie's heart.

A footstep seem'd to fall beside her path,

She knew not whence ; a whisper on her
ear,
She knew not what ; nor loved she to be left
Alone at home, nor ventured out alone.
What ail'd her then, that ere she enter'd,
often
Her hand dwelt lingeringly on the latch,
Fearing to enter : Philip thought he knew :
Such doubts and fears were common to
her state,
Being with child : but when her child was
born,
Then her new child was as herself renew'd,
Then the new mother came about her
heart,
Then her good Philip was her all-in-all,
And that mysterious instinct wholly died.

And where was Enoch ? prosperously
sail'd
The ship ' Good Fortune,' tho' at setting
forth
The Biscay, roughly ridging eastward,
shook
And almost overwhelm'd her, yet unvest
She slipt across the summer of the world,
Then after a long tumble about the Cape
And frequent interchange of foul and fair,
She passing thro' the summer world again,
The breath of heaven came continually
And sent her sweetly by the golden isles,
Till silent in her oriental haven.

There Enoch traded for himself, and
bought
Quaint monsters for the market of those
times,
A gilded dragon, also, for the babes.

Less lucky her home-voyage : at first
indeed
Thro' many a fair sea-circle, day by day,
Scarce-rocking, her full-busted figure-head
Stared o'er the ripple feathering from her
bows :
Then follow'd calms, and then winds
variable,
Then baffling, a long course of them ; and
last
Storm, such as drove her under moonless
heavens

Till hard upon the cry of ' breakers ' came
The crash of ruin, and the loss of all
But Enoch and two others. Half the
night,
Buoy'd upon floating tackle and broken
spars,
These drifted, stranding on an isle at morn
Rich, but the loneliest in a lonely sea.

No want was there of human sustenance,
Soft fruitage, mighty nuts, and nourishing
roots ;
Nor save for pity was it hard to take
The helpless life so wild that it was tame.
There in a seaward-gazing mountain-gorge
They built, and thatch'd with leaves of
palm, a hut,
Half hut, half native cavern. So the
three,
Set in this Eden of all plenteousness,
Dwelt with eternal summer, ill-content.

For one, the youngest, hardly more than
boy,
Hurt in that night of sudden ruin and
wreck,
Lay lingering out a five-years' death-in-
life.
They could not leave him. After he was
gone,
The two remaining found a fallen stem ;
And Enoch's comrade, careless of himself,
Fire-hollowing this in Indian fashion, fell
Sun-stricken, and that other lived alone.
In those two deaths he read God's warn-
ing ' wait.'

The mountain wooded to the peak, the
lawns
And winding glades high up like ways to
Heaven,
The slender coco's drooping crown of
plumes,
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
The lustre of the long convolvuluses
That coil'd around the stately stems, and
ran
Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
And glories of the broad belt of the world,
All these he saw ; but what he fain had
seen

He could not see, the kindly human face,
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard
The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
The league-long roller thundering on the
reef,

The moving whisper of huge trees that
branch'd

And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep
Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,
As down the shore he ranged, or all day
long

Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail :
No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices ;
The blaze upon the waters to the east ;
The blaze upon his island overhead ;
The blaze upon the waters to the west ;
Then the great stars that globed them-
selves in Heaven,

The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

There often as he watch'd or seem'd to
watch,

So still, the golden lizard on him paused,
A phantom made of many phantoms
moved

Before him haunting him, or he himself
Moved haunting people, things and places,
known

Far in a darker isle beyond the line ;
The babes, their babble, Annie, the small
house,

The climbing street, the mill, the leafy
lanes,

The peacock-yewtree and the lonely Hall,
The horse he drove, the boat he sold, the
chill

November dawns and dewy-glooming
downs,

The gentle shower, the smell of dying
leaves,

And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas.

Once likewise, in the ringing of his
ears,

Tho' faintly, merrily—far and far away—
He heard the pealing of his parish bells ;

Then, tho' he knew not wherefore, started
up

Shuddering, and when the beauteous
hateful isle

Return'd upon him, had not his poor heart
Spoken with That, which being every-
where

Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem
all alone,

Surely the man had died of solitude.

Thus over Enoch's early-silvering head
The sunny and rainy seasons came and
went

Year after year. His hopes to see his own,
And pace the sacred old familiar fields,
Not yet had perish'd, when his lonely
doom

Came suddenly to an end. Another ship
(She wanted water) blown by baffling
winds,

Like the Good Fortune, from her destined
course,

Stay'd by this isle, not knowing where
she lay :

For since the mate had seen at early dawn
Across a break on the mist-wreathen isle
The silent water slipping from the hills,
They sent a crew that landing burst away
In search of stream or fount, and fill'd the
shores

With clamour. Downward from his
mountain gorge

Stept the long-hair'd long-bearded solitary,
Brown, looking hardly human, strangely
clad,

Muttering and mumbling, idiotlike it
seem'd,

With inarticulate rage, and making signs
They knew not what : and yet he led the
way

To where the rivulets of sweet water ran ;
And ever as he mingled with the crew,
And heard them talking, his long-bounden
tongue

Was loosen'd, till he made them under-
stand ;

Whom, when their casks were fill'd they
took aboard :

And there the tale he utter'd brokenly,

Scarce-credited at first but more and more,
Amazed and melted all who listen'd to it:
And clothes they gave him and free passage home;

But oft he work'd among the rest and shook

His isolation from him. None of these
Came from his country, or could answer him,

If question'd, aught of what he cared to know.

And dull the voyage was with long delays,
The vessel scarce sea-worthy; but evermore

His fancy fled before the lazy wind
Returning, till beneath a clouded moon
He like a lover down thro' all his blood
Drew in the dewy meadowy morning-breath

Of England, blown across her ghostly wall:
And that same morning officers and men
Levied a kindly tax upon themselves,
Pitying the lonely man, and gave him it:
Then moving up the coast they landed him,
Ev'n in that harbour whence he sail'd before.

There Enoch spoke no word to any one,
But homeward—home—what home? had he a home?

His home, he walk'd. Bright was that afternoon,

Sunny but chill; till drawn thro' either chasm,

Where either haven open'd on the deeps,
Roll'd a sea-haze and whelm'd the world in gray;

Cut off the length of highway on before,
And left but narrow breadth to left and right

Of wither'd holt or tilth or pasturage.
On the nigh-naked tree the robin piped
Disconsolate, and thro' the dripping haze
The dead weight of the dead leaf bore it down:

Thicker the drizzle grew, deeper the gloom;

Last, as it seem'd, a great mist-blotted light
Flared on him, and he came upon the place.

Then down the long street having slowly stolen,

His heart foreshadowing all calamity,
His eyes upon the stones, he reach'd the home

Where Annie lived and loved him, and his babes

In those far-off seven happy years were born;

But finding neither light nor murmur there
(A bill of sale gleam'd thro' the drizzle) crept

Still downward thinking 'dead or dead to me!'

Down to the pool and narrow wharf he went,

Seeking a tavern which of old he knew,
A front of timber-crost antiquity,

So propt, worm-eaten, ruinously old,
He thought it must have gone; but he was gone

Who kept it; and his widow Miriam Lane,

With daily-dwindling profits held the house;

A haunt of brawling seamen once, but now
Still, with yet a bed for wandering men.
There Enoch rested silent many days.

But Miriam Lane was good and garrulous,

Nor let him be, but often breaking in,
Told him, with other annals of the port,
Not knowing—Enoch was so brown, so bow'd,

So broken—all the story of his house.
His baby's death, her growing poverty,
How Philip put her little ones to school,
And kept them in it, his long wooing her,
Her slow consent, and marriage, and the birth

Of Philip's child: and o'er his countenance

No shadow past, nor motion: any one,
Regarding, well had deem'd he felt the tale

Less than the teller: only when she closed
'Enoch, poor man, was cast away and lost'

He, shaking his gray head pathetically,
Repeated muttering 'cast away and lost';
Again in deeper inward whispers 'lost!'

But Enoch yearn'd to see her face
again;
'If I might look on her sweet face again
And know that she is happy.' So the
thought

Haunted and harass'd him, and drove
him forth,

At evening when the dull November day
Was growing duller twilight, to the hill.
There he sat down gazing on all below;
There did a thousand memories roll upon
him,

Unspeakable for sadness. By and by
The ruddy square of comfortable light,
Far-blazing from the rear of Philip's
house,

Allured him, as the beacon-blaze allures
The bird of passage, till he madly strikes
Against it, and beats out his weary life.

For Philip's dwelling fronted on the
street,

The latest house to landward: but be-
hind,

With one small gate that open'd on the
waste,

Flourish'd a little garden square and
wall'd:

And in it throve an ancient evergreen,
A yewtree, and all round it ran a walk
Of shingle, and a walk divided it:

But Enoch shunn'd the middle walk and
stole

Up by the wall, behind the yew; and
thence

That which he better might have shunn'd,
if griefs

Like his have worse or better, Enoch
saw.

For cups and silver on the burnish'd
board
Sparkled and shone; so genial was the
hearth:

And on the right hand of the hearth he
saw

Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,

Stout, rosy, with his babe across his
knees;

And o'er her second father stooped a girl,
A later but a loftier Annie Lee,
Fair-hair'd and tall, and from her lifted
hand

Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring
To tempt the babe, who rear'd his creasy
arms,

Caught at and ever miss'd it, and they
laugh'd:

And on the left hand of the hearth he saw
The mother glancing often toward her
babe,

But turning now and then to speak with
him,

Her son, who stood beside her tall and
strong,

And saying that which pleased him, for
he smiled.

Now when the dead man come to life
beheld

His wife his wife no more, and saw the
babe

Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,
And all the warmth, the peace, the
happiness,

And his own children tall and beautiful,
And him, that other, reigning in his place,
Lord of his rights and of his children's
love,—

Then he, tho' Miriam Lane had told him
all,

Because things seen are mightier than
things heard,

Stagger'd and shook, holding the branch,
and fear'd

To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,
Which in one moment, like the blast of
doom,

Would shatter all the happiness of the
hearth.

He therefore turning softly like a thief,
Lest the harsh shingle should grate under-
foot,

And feeling all along the garden-wall,
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be
found,

Crept to the gate, and open'd it, and closed,
As lightly as a sick man's chamber-door.
Behind him, and came out upon the waste.

And there he would have knelt, but that his knees
Were feeble, so that falling prone he dug
His fingers into the wet earth, and pray'd.

'Too hard to bear ! why did they take me thence ?
O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou
That didst uphold me on my lonely isle,
Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness
A little longer ! aid me, give me strength
Not to tell her, never to let her know.
Help me not to break in upon her peace.
My children too ! must I not speak to these ?

They know me not. I should betray myself.
Never : No father's kiss for me—the girl
So like her mother, and the boy, my son.'

There speech and thought and nature fail'd a little,
And he lay tranced ; but when he rose and paced
Back toward his solitary home again,
All down the long and narrow street he went
Beating it in upon his weary brain,
As tho' it were the burthen of a song,
'Not to tell her, never to let her know.'

He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up thro' all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul. 'This miller's wife'
He said to Miriam 'that you spoke about,
Has she no fear that her first husband lives ?'

'Ay, ay, poor soul' said Miriam, 'fear enow !

If you could tell her you had seen him dead,

Why, that would be her comfort ;' and he thought

'After the Lord has call'd me she shall know,

I wait His time,' and Enoch set himself,
Scorning an alms, to work whereby to live.
Almost to all things could he turn his hand.

Cooper he was and carpenter, and wrought
To make the boatmen fishing-nets, or help'd

At lading and unlading the tall barks,
That brought the stinted commerce of those days ;

Thus earn'd a scanty living for himself :
Yet since he did but labour for himself,
Work without hope, there was not life in it

Whereby the man could live ; and as the year

Roll'd itself round again to meet the day
When Enoch had return'd, a langour came

Upon him, gentle sickness, gradually
Weakening the man, till he could do no more,

But kept the house, his chair, and last his bed.

And Enoch bore his weakness cheerfully.
For sure no gladlier does the stranded wreck

See thro' the gray skirts of a lifting squall
The boat that bears the hope of life approach

To save the life despair'd of, than he saw
Death dawning on him, and the close of all.

For thro' that dawning gleam'd a kinder hope

On Enoch thinking 'after I am gone,
Then may she learn I lov'd her to the last.'
He call'd aloud for Miriam Lane and said
'Woman, I have a secret—only swear,
Before I tell you—swear upon the book
Not to reveal it, till you see me dead.'

'Dead,' clamour'd the good woman, 'hear him talk !

I warrant, man, that we shall bring you round.'

'Swear' added Enoch sternly 'on the book.'

And on the book, half-frighted, Miriam swore.

Then Enoch rolling his gray eyes upon her, 'Did you know Enoch Arden of this town?'

'Know him?' she said 'I knew him far away.

Ay, ay, I mind him coming down the street ;

Held his head high, and cared for no man, he.'

Slowly and sadly Enoch answer'd her ; 'His head is low, and no man cares for him.

I think I have not three days more to live ; I am the man.' At which the woman gave A half-incredulous, half-hysterical cry.

'You Arden, you ! nay,—sure he was a foot

Higher than you be.' Enoch said again 'My God has bow'd me down to what I am ;

My grief and solitude have broken me ; Nevertheless, know you that I am he Who married—but that name has twice been changed—

I married her who married Philip Ray. Sit, listen.' Then he told her of his voyage,

His wreck, his lonely life, his coming back, His gazing in on Annie, his resolve, And how he kept it. As the woman heard,

Fast flow'd the current of her easy tears, While in her heart she yearn'd incessantly To rush abroad all round the little haven, Proclaiming Enoch Arden and his woes ; But awed and promise-bounden she forbore,

Saying only 'See your bairns before you go ! Eh, let me fetch 'em, Arden,' and arose Eager to bring them down, for Enoch hung

A moment on her words, but then replied :

'Woman, disturb me not now at the last,

But let me hold my purpose till I die.

Sit down again ; mark me and understand, While I have power to speak. I charge you now,

When you shall see her, tell her that I died Blessing her, praying for her, loving her ; Save for the bar between us, loving her As when she laid her head beside my own. And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw So like her mother, that my latest breath Was spent in blessing her and praying for her.

And tell my son that I died blessing him. And say to Philip that I blest him too ; He never meant us any thing but good. But if my children care to see me dead, Who hardly knew me living, let them come,

I am their father ; but she must not come, For my dead face would vex her after-life. And now there is but one of all my blood Who will embrace me in the world-to-be : This hair is his : she cut it off and gave it, And I have borne it with me all these years,

And thought to bear it with me to my grave ;

But now my mind is changed, for I shall see him,

My babe in bliss : wherefore when I am gone,

Take, give her this, for it may comfort her :

It will moreover be a token to her, That I am he.'

He ceased ; and Miriam Lane Made such a voluble answer promising all, That once again he roll'd his eyes upon her

Repeating all he wish'd, and once again She promised.

Then the third night after this, While Enoch slumber'd motionless and pale, And Miriam watch'd and dozed at intervals,

There came so loud a calling of the sea,
That all the houses in the haven rang.
He woke, he rose, he spread his arms
abroad
Crying with a loud voice 'A sail! a sail!
I am saved;' and so fell back and spoke
no more.

So past the strong heroic soul away.
And when they buried him the little port
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

THE BROOK

HERE, by this brook, we parted; I to the
East

And he for Italy—too late—too late:
One whom the strong sons of the world
despise;

For lucky rhymes to him were scrip and
share,

And mellow metres more than cent for
cent;

Nor could he understand how money
breeds,

Thought it a dead thing; yet himself
could make

The thing that is not as the thing that
is.

O had he lived! In our schoolbooks we
say,

Of those that held their heads above the
crowd,

They flourish'd then or then; but life in
him

Could scarce be said to flourish, only
touch'd

On such a time as goes before the leaf,
When all the wood stands in a mist of
green,

And nothing perfect: yet the brook he
loved,

For which, in branding summers of
Bengal,

Or ev'n the sweet half-English Neilgherry
air

I panted, seems, as I re-listen to it,
Prattling the primrose fancies of the boy,
To me that loved him; for 'O brook,'
he says,

'O babbling brook,' says Edmund in his
rhyme,

'Whence come you?' and the brook, why
not? replies.

I come from haunts of coot and hern,

I make a sudden sally,

And sparkle out among the fern,

Toicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,

Or slip between the ridges,

By twenty thorps, a little town,

And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow

To join the brimming river,

For men may come and men may go,

But I go on for ever.

'Poor lad, he died at Florence, quite
worn out,

Travelling to Naples. There is Darnley
bridge,

It has more ivy; there the river; and there
Stands Philip's farm where brook and
river meet.

I chatter over stony ways,

In little sharps and trebles,

I bubble into eddying bays,

I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret

By many a field and fallow,

And many a fairy foreland set

With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow

To join the brimming river,

For men may come and men may go,

But I go on for ever.

'But Philip chatter'd more than brook
or bird;

Old Philip; all about the fields you caught
His weary daylong chirping, like the dry
High-elbow'd grigs that leap in summer
grass.

I wind about, and in and out,

With here a blossom sailing,

And here and there a lusty trout,

And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake

Upon me, as I travel

With many a silvery waterbreak

Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

‘O darling Katie Willows, his one
child !
A maiden of our century, yet most meek ;
A daughter of our meadows, yet not
coarse ;
Straight, but as lissome as a hazel wand ;
Her eyes a bashful azure, and her hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the
shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within.

‘Sweet Katie, once I did her a good
turn,
Her and her far-off cousin and betrothed,
James Willows, of one name and heart
with her.

For here I came, twenty years back—the
week

Before I parted with poor Edmund ; crost
By that old bridge which, half in ruins
then,

Still makes a hoary eyebrow for the gleam
Beyond it, where the waters marry—crost,
Whistling a random bar of Bonny Doon,
And push’d at Philip’s garden-gate. The
gate,

Half-parted from a weak and scolding
hinge,

Stuck ; and he clamour’d from a case-
ment, “Run”

To Katie somewhere in the walks below,
“Run, Katie !” Katie never ran : she
moved

To meet me, winding under woodbine
bowers,

A little flutter’d, with her eyelids down,
Fresh apple-blossom, blushing for a boon.

‘What was it ? less of sentiment than
sense

Had Katie ; not illiterate ; nor of those
Who dabbling in the fount of fictive tears,
And nursed by mealy-mouth’d philan-
thropies,

Divorce the Feeling from her mate the
Deed.

‘She told me. She and James had
quarrell’d. Why ?

What cause of quarrel ? None, she said,
no cause ;

James had no cause : but when I prest
the cause,

I learnt that James had flickering jea-
lousies

Which anger’d her. Who anger’d James ?
I said.

But Katie snatch’d her eyes at once from
mine,

And sketching with her slender pointed
foot

Some figure like a wizard pentagram
On garden gravel, let my query pass
Unclaim’d, in flushing silence, till I ask’d
If James were coming. “Coming every
day,”

She answer’d, “ever longing to explain,
But evermore her father came across
With some long-winded tale, and broke
him short ;

And James departed vext with him and
her.”

How could I help her ? “Would I—was
it wrong ?”

(Claspt hands and that petitionary grace
Of sweet seventeen subdued me ere she
spoke)

“O would I take her father for one hour,
For one half-hour, and let him talk to me !”
And even while she spoke, I saw where
James

Made toward us, like a wader in the surf,
Beyond the brook, waist-deep in meadow-
sweet.

‘O Katie, what I suffer’d for your sake !
For in I went, and call’d old Philip out
To show the farm : full willingly he rose :
He led me thro’ the short sweet-smelling
lanes

Of his wheat-suburb, babbling as he went.
He praised his land, his horses, his
machines ;

He praised his ploughs, his cows, his hogs,
his dogs ;

He praised his hens, his geese, his guinea-
hens ;

His pigeons, who in session on their roofs
Approved him, bowing at their own
deserts :

Then from the plaintive mother's teat he
took

Her blind and shuddering puppies, naming
each,

And naming those, his friends, for whom
they were :

Then crost the common into Darnley
chase

To show Sir Arthur's deer. In copse
and fern

Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail.

Then, seated on a serpent-rooted beech,
He pointed out a pasturing colt, and
said :

"That was the four-year-old I sold the
Squire."

And there he told a long long-winded tale
Of how the Squire had seen the colt at
grass,

And how it was the thing his daughter
wish'd,

And how he sent the bailiff to the farm
To learn the price, and what the price he
ask'd,

And how the bailiff swore that he was
mad,

But he stood firm ; and so the matter
hung ;

He gave them line : and five days after
that

He met the bailiff at the Golden Fleece,
Who then and there had offer'd something
more,

But he stood firm ; and so the matter
hung ;

He knew the man ; the colt would fetch
its price ;

He gave them line : and how by chance
at last

(It might be May or April, he forgot,
The last of April or the first of May)

He found the bailiff riding by the farm,
And, talking from the point, he drew
him in,

And there he mellow'd all his heart with
ale,

Until they closed a bargain, hand in hand.

'Then, while I breathed in sight of
haven, he,

Poor fellow, could he help it? recom-
menced,

And ran thro' all the coltish chronicle,
Wild Will, Black Bess, Tantivy, Tallyho,
Reform, White Rose, Bellerophon, the
Jilt,

Arbaces, and Phenomenon, and the rest,
Till, not to die a listener, I arose,

And with me Philip, talking still ; and so
We turn'd our foreheads from the falling
sun,

And following our own shadows thrice
as long

As when they follow'd us from Philip's
door,

Arrived and found the sun of sweet con-
tent

Re-risen in Katie's eyes, and all things
well.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers ;

I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows ;

I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses ;

I linger by my shingly bars ;
I loiter round my cresses ;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,

For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

Yes, men may come and go ; and these
are gone,

All gone. My dearest brother, Edmund,
sleeps,

Not by the well-known stream and rustic
spire,

But unfamiliar Arno, and the dome
Of Brunelleschi ; sleeps in peace : and he,

Poor Philip, of all his lavish waste of
words

Remains the lean P. W. on his tomb :

I scraped the lichen from it : Katie walks
By the long wash of Australasian seas
Far off, and holds her head to other stars,
And breathes in April-autumns. All are
gone.'

So Lawrence Aylmer, seated on a stile
In the long hedge, and rolling in his
mind
Old waifs of rhyme, and bowing o'er the
brook

A tonsured head in middle age forlorn,
Mused, and was mute. On a sudden a
low breath

Of tender air made tremble in the
hedge

The fragile bindweed-bells and briony
rings ;

And he look'd up. There stood a maiden
near,

Waiting to pass. In much amaze he
stared

On eyes a bashful azure, and on hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the
shell

Divides threefold to show the fruit with-
in :

Then, wondering, ask'd her 'Are you
from the farm?'

'Yes' answer'd she. 'Pray stay a little :
pardon me ;

What do they call you?' 'Katie.' 'That
were strange.

What surname?' 'Willows.' 'No !'
'That is my name.'

'Indeed !' and here he look'd so self-
perplexed,

That Katie laugh'd, and laughing blush'd,
till he

Laugh'd also, but as one before he
wakes,

Who feels a glimmering strangeness in
his dream.

Then looking at her ; 'Too happy, fresh
and fair,

Too fresh and fair in our sad world's best
bloom,

To be the ghost of one who bore your
name

About these meadows, twenty years ago.'

'Have you not heard?' said Katie,
'we came back.

We bought the farm we tenanted before.
Am I so like her? so they said on board.
Sir, if you knew her in her English days,
My mother, as it seems you did, the days
That most she loves to talk of, come
with me.

My brother James is in the harvest-field :
But she—you will be welcome—O, come
in !'

AYLMER'S FIELD

1793

DUST are our frames ; and, gilded dust,
our pride

Looks only for a moment whole and
sound ;

Like that long-buried body of the king,
Found lying with his urns and ornaments,
Which at a touch of light, an air of
heaven,

Slit into ashes, and was found no more.

Here is a story which in rougher shape
Came from a grizzled cripple, whom I
saw

Sunning himself in a waste field alone—
Old, and a mine of memories—who had
served,

Long since, a bygone Rector of the place,
And been himself a part of what he told.

SIR AYLMEY AYLMEY, that almighty
man,

The county God—in whose capacious
hall,

Hung with a hundred shields, the family
tree

Sprang from the midriff of a prostrate
king—

Whose blazing wyvern weathercock'd the
spire,

Stood from his walls and wing'd his entry-
gates

And swang besides on many a windy
sign—

Whose eyes from under a pyramidal head

Saw from his windows nothing save his
own—

What lovelier of his own had he than
her,

His only child, his Edith, whom he loved
As heiress and not heir regretfully?

But 'he that marries her marries her
name'

This fiat somewhat soothed himself and
wife,

His wife a faded beauty of the Baths,
Inspid as the Queen upon a card;

Her all of thought and bearing hardly
more

Than his own shadow in a sickly sun.

A land of hops and poppy-mingled
corn,

Little about it stirring save a brook!

A sleepy land, where under the same
wheel

The same old rut would deepen year by
year;

Where almost all the village had one
name;

Where Aylmer followed Aylmer at the
Hall

And Averill Averill at the Rectory

Thrice over; so that Rectory and Hall,

Bound in an immemorial intimacy,

Were open to each other; tho' to dream

That Love could bind them closer well
had made

The hoar hair of the Baronet bristle up

With horror, worse than had he heard
his priest

Preach an inverted scripture, sons of men
Daughters of God; so sleepy was the
land.

And might not Averill, had he will'd
it so,

Somewhere beneath his own low range
of roofs,

Have also set his many-shielded tree?

There was an Aylmer-Averill marriage
once.

When the red rose was redder than itself,

And York's white rose as red as Lan-
caster's,

With wounded peace which each had
prick'd to death.

'Not proven' Averill said, or laughingly
'Some other race of Averills'—prov'n

or no,

What cared he? what, if other or the
same?

He lean'd not on his fathers but himself.

But Leolin, his brother, living oft

With Averill, and a year or two before

Call'd to the bar, but ever call'd away

By one low voice to one dear neighbour-
hood,

Would often, in his walks with Edith,
claim

A distant kinship to the gracious blood

That shook the heart of Edith hearing
him.

Sanguine he was: a but less vivid hue

Than of that islet in the chestnut-bloom

Flamed in his cheek; and eager eyes,
that still

Took joyful note of all things joyful,
beam'd,

Beneath a manelike mass of rolling gold,

Their best and brightest, when they dwelt
on hers,

Edith, whose pensive beauty, perfect else,

But subject to the season or the mood,

Shone like a mystic star between the less

And greater glory varying to and fro,

We know not wherefore; bqunteously
made,

And yet so finely, that a troublous touch

Thinn'd, or would seem to thin her in a
day,

A joyous to dilate, as toward the light.

And these had been together from the
first.

Leolin's first nurse was, five years after,
hers:

So much the boy foreran; but when his
date

Doubled her own, for want of playmates,
he

(Since Averill was a decad and a half

His elder, and their parents underground)

Had tost his ball and flown his kite, and
roll'd

His hoop to pleasure Edith, with her dipt
Against the rush of the air in the prone
swing,

Made blossom-ball or daisy-chain, ar-
ranged

Her garden, sow'd her name and kept it
green

In living letters, told her fairy-tales,
Show'd her the fairy footings on the
grass,

The little dell of cowslip, fairy palms,
The petty mare's-tail forest, fairy pines,
Or from the tiny pitted target blew
What look'd a flight of fairy arrows aim'd
All at one mark, all hitting : make-be-
lieves

For Edith and himself : or else he forged,
But that was later, boyish histories

Of battle, bold adventure, dungeon,
wreck,

Flights, terrors, sudden rescues, and true
love

Crown'd after trial ; sketches rude and
faint,

But where a passion yet unborn perhaps
Lay hidden as the music of the moon
Sleeps in the plain eggs of the nightingale.

And thus together, save for college-times
Or Temple-eaten terms, a couple, fair
As ever painter painted, poet sang,
Or Heaven in lavish bounty moulded,
grew.

And more and more, the maiden woman-
grown,

He wasted hours with Averill ; there,
when first

The tented winter-field was broken up
Into that phalanx of the summer spears
That soon should wear the garland ; there
again

When burr and bine were gather'd ;
lastly there

At Christmas ; ever welcome at the Hall,
On whose dull sameness his full tide of
youth

Broke with a phosphorescence charming
even

My lady ; and the Baronet yet had laid
No bar between them : dull and self-
involved,

Tall and erect, but bending from his
height

With half-allowing smiles for all the
world,

And mighty courteous in the main—his
pride

Lay deeper than to wear it as his ring—

He, like an Aylmer in his Aylmerism,
Would care no more for Leolin's walking
with her

Than for his old Newfoundland's, when
they ran

To loose him at the stables, for he rose
Twofooted at the limit of his chain,
Roaring to make a third : and how should
Love,

Whom the cross-lightnings of four chance-
met eyes

Flash into fiery life from nothing, follow
Such dear familiarities of dawn ?

Seldom, but when he does, Master of all.

So these young hearts not knowing that
they loved,

Not she at least, nor conscious of a bar
Between them, nor by plight or broken
ring

Bound, but an immemorial intimacy,
Wander'd at will, and oft accompanied
By Averill : his, a brother's love, that
hung

With wings of brooding shelter o'er her
peace,

Might have been other, save for Leolin's—
Who knows ? but so they wander'd, hour
by hour

Gather'd the blossom that rebloom'd, and
drank

The magic cup that fill'd itself anew.

A whisper half reveal'd her to herself.
For out beyond her lodges, where the
brook

Vocal, with here and there a silence, ran
By sawly rims, arose the labourers'
homes,

A frequent haunt of Edith, on low knolls
That dimpling died into each other, huts
At random scatter'd, each a nest in
bloom.

Her art, her hand, her counsel all had
wrought
About them : here was one that, summer-
blanch'd,
Was parcel-bearded with the traveller's-
joy
In Autumn, parcel ivy-clad ; and here
The warm-blue breathings of a hidden
hearth
Broke from a bower of vine and honey-
suckle :
One look'd all rosetree, and another wore
A close-set robe of jasmine sown with
stars :
This had a rosy sea of gillyflowers
About it ; this, a milky-way on earth,
Like visions in the Northern dreamer's
heavens,
A lily-avenue climbing to the doors ;
One, almost to the martin-haunted eaves
A summer burial deep in hollyhocks ;
Each, its own charm ; and Edith's every-
where ;
And Edith ever visitant with him,
He but less loved than Edith, of her
poor :
For she—so lowly-lovely and so loving,
Queenly responsive when the loyal hand
Rose from the clay it work'd in as she
past,
Not sowing hedgerow texts and passing
by,
Nor dealing goodly counsel from a height
That makes the lowest hate it, but a voice
Of comfort and an open hand of help,
A splendid presence flattering the poor
roofs
Revered as theirs, but kindlier than them-
selves
To ailing wife or wailing infancy
Or old bedridden palsy,—was adored ;
He, loved for her and for himself. A
grasp
Having the warmth and muscle of the
heart,
A childly way with children, and a laugh
Ringing like proven golden coinage true,
Were no false passport to that easy realm,
Where once with Leolin at her side the
girl,

Nursing a child, and turning to the
warmth
The tender pink five-beaded baby-soles,
Heard the good mother softly whisper
' Bless,
God bless 'em : marriages are made in
Heaven.'

A flash of semi-jealousy clear'd it to
her.
My lady's Indian kinsman unannounced
With half a score of swarthy faces came.
His own, tho' keen and bold and soldierly,
Sear'd by the close ecliptic, was not fair ;
Fairer his talk, a tongue that ruled the
hour,
Tho' seeming boastful : so when first he
dash'd
Into the chronicle of a deedful day,
Sir Aylmer half forgot his lazy smile
Of patron ' Good ! my lady's kinsman !
good !'
My lady with her fingers interlock'd,
And rotatory thumbs on silken knees,
Call'd all her vital spirits into each ear
To listen : unawares they flitted off,
Busying themselves about the flowerage
That stood from out a stiff brocade in
which,
The meteor of a splendid season, she,
Once with this kinsman, ah so long ago,
Stept thro' the stately minuet of those
days :
But Edith's eager fancy hurried with him
Snatch'd thro' the perilous passes of his
life :
Till Leolin ever watchful of her eye,
Hated him with a momentary hate.
Wife-hunting, as the rumour ran, was
he :
I know not, for he spoke not, only
shower'd
His oriental gifts on everyone
And most on Edith : like a storm he
came,
And shook the house, and like a storm
he went.

Among the gifts he left her (possibly
He flow'd and ebb'd uncertain, to return

When others had been tested) there was
one,

A dagger, in rich sheath with jewels on it
Sprinkled about in gold that branch'd
itself

Fine as ice-ferns on January panes
Made by a breath. I know not whence
at first,

Nor of what race, the work; but as he told
The story, storming a hill-fort of thieves
He got it; for their captain after fight,
His comrades having fought their last
below,

Was climbing up the valley; at whom
he shot:

Down from the beetling crag to which he
clung

Tumbled the tawny rascal at his feet,
This dagger with him, which when now
admired

By Edith whom his pleasure was to please,
At once the costly Sahib yielded to her.

And Leolin, coming after he was gone,
Tost over all her presents petulantly:
And when she show'd the wealthy scab-
bard, saying

'Look what a lovely piece of workman-
ship!'

Slight was his answer 'Well—I care not
for it:'

Then playing with the blade he prick'd
his hand,

'A gracious gift to give a lady, this!'

'But would it be more gracious' ask'd
the girl

'Were I to give this gift of his to one
That is no lady?' 'Gracious? No' said he.

'Me?—but I cared not for it. O pardon
me,

I seem to be ungraciousness itself.'

'Take it' she added sweetly, 'tho' his
gift;

For I am more ungracious ev'n than you,
I care not for it either;' and he said

'Why then I love it:' but Sir Aylmer
past,

And neither loved nor liked the thing he
heard.

The next day came a neighbour.
Blues and reds

They talk'd of: blues were sure of it, he
thought:

Then of the latest fox—where started—
kill'd

In such a bottom: 'Peter had the brush,
My Peter, first:' and did Sir Aylmer know
That great pock-pitten fellow had been
caught?

Then made his pleasure echo, hand to
hand,

And rolling as it were the substance of it
Between his palms a moment up and
down—

'The birds were warm, the birds were
warm upon him;

We have him now:' and had Sir Aylmer
heard—

Nay, but he must—the land was ringing
of it—

This blacksmith border-marriage—one
they knew—

Raw from the nursery—who could trust
a child?

That cursed France with her egalities!

And did Sir Aylmer (deferentially
With nearing chair and lower'd accent)
think—

For people talk'd—that it was wholly wise
To let that handsome fellow Averill walk
So freely with his daughter? people
talk'd—

The boy might get a notion into him;

The girl might be entangled ere she knew.
Sir Aylmer Aylmer slowly stiffening
spoke:

'The girl and boy, Sir, know their differ-
ences!'

'Good,' said his friend, 'but watch!'
and he, 'Enough,

More than enough, Sir! I can guard my
own.'

They parted, and Sir Aylmer Aylmer
watch'd.

Pale, for on her the thunders of the
house

Had fallen first, was Edith that same
night;

Pale as the Jephtha's daughter, a rough
 piece
 Of early rigid colour, under which
 Withdrawing by the counter door to that
 Which Leolin open'd, she cast back upon
 him
 A piteous glance, and vanish'd. He, as
 one
 Caught in a burst of unexpected storm,
 And pelted with outrageous epithets,
 Turning beheld the Powers of the House
 On either side the hearth, indignant ;
 her,
 Cooling her false cheek with a featherfan,
 Him, glaring, by his own stale devil
 spurr'd,
 And, like a beast hard-riden, breathing
 hard.
 'Ungenerous, dishonourable, base,
 Presumptuous ! trusted as he was with
 her,
 The sole succeder to their wealth, their
 lands,
 The last remaining pillar of their house,
 The one transmitter of their ancient name,
 Their child.' 'Our child !' 'Our
 heiress !' 'Ours !' for still,
 Like echoes from beyond a hollow, came
 Her sicklier iteration. Last he said,
 'Boy, mark me ! for your fortunes are to
 make.
 I swear you shall not make them out of
 mine.
 Now inasmuch as you have practised on
 her,
 Perplext her, made her half forget herself,
 Swerve from her duty to herself and us—
 Things in an Aylmer deem'd impossible,
 Far as we track ourselves—I say that
 this—
 Else I withdraw favour and countenance
 From you and yours for ever—shall you
 do.
 Sir, when you see her—but you shall not
 see her—
 No, you shall write, and not to her, but
 me :
 And you shall say that having spoken
 with me,
 And after look'd into yourself, you find

That you meant nothing—as indeed you
 know
 That you meant nothing. Such a match
 as this !
 Impossible, prodigious !' These were
 words,
 As meted by his measure of himself,
 Arguing boundless forbearance : after
 which,
 And Leolin's horror-stricken answer, 'I
 So foul a traitor to myself and her,
 Never oh never,' for about as long
 As the wind-hover hangs in balance,
 paused
 Sir Aylmer reddening from the storm
 within,
 Then broke all bonds of courtesy, and
 crying
 'Boy, should I find you by my doors
 again,
 My men shall lash you from them like a
 dog ;
 Hence !' with a sudden execration drove
 The footstool from before him, and arose ;
 So, stammering 'scoundrel' out of teeth
 that ground
 As in a dreadful dream, while Leolin still
 Retreated half-aghast, the fierce old man
 Follow'd, and under his own lintel stood
 Storming with lifted hands, a hoary face
 Meet for the reverence of the hearth, but
 now,
 Beneath a pale and unimpassion'd moon,
 Vext with unworthy madness, and de-
 form'd.
 Slowly and conscious of the rageful eye
 That watch'd him, till he heard the
 ponderous door
 Close, crashing with long echoes thro' the
 land,
 Went Leolin ; then, his passions all in
 flood
 And masters of his motion, furiously
 Down thro' the bright lawns to his
 brother's ran,
 And foam'd away his heart at Averill's
 ear :
 Whom Averill solaced as he might,
 amazed :

The man was his, had been his father's,
 friend :
 He must have seen, himself had seen it
 long ;
 He must have known, himself had known :
 besides,
 He never yet had set his daughter forth
 Here in the woman-markets of the west,
 Where our Caucasians let themselves be
 sold.
 Some one, he thought, had slander'd
 Leolin to him.
 'Brother, for I have loved you more as
 son
 Than brother, let me tell you : I myself—
 What is their pretty saying ? jilted, is it ?
 Jilted I was : I say it for your peace.
 Pain'd, and, as bearing in myself the
 shame
 The woman should have borne, humili-
 ated,
 I lived for years a stunted sunless life ;
 Till after our good parents past away
 Watching your growth, I seem'd again to
 grow.
 Leolin, I almost sin in envying you :
 The very whitest lamb in all my fold
 Loves you : I know her : the worst
 thought she has
 Is whiter even than her pretty hand :
 She must prove true : for, brother, where
 two fight
 The strongest wins, and truth and love
 are strength,
 And you are happy : let her parents be.'

But Leolin cried out the more upon
 them—
 Insolent, brainless, heartless ! heiress,
 wealth,
 Their wealth, their heiress ! wealth
 enough was theirs
 For twenty matches. Were he lord of
 this,
 Why twenty boys and girls should marry
 on it,
 And forty blest ones bless him, and him-
 self
 Be wealthy still, ay wealthier. He be-
 lieved

This filthy marriage-hindering Mammon
 made
 The harlot of the cities : nature crost
 Was mother of the foul adulteries
 That saturate soul with body. Name,
 too ! name,
 Their ancient name ! they *might* be
 proud ; its worth
 Was being Edith's. Ah how pale she
 had look'd
 Darling, to-night ! they must have rated
 her
 Beyond all tolerance. These old pheasant-
 lords,
 These partridge-breeders of a thousand
 years,
 Who had mildew'd in their thousands,
 doing nothing
 Since Egbert—why, the greater their
 disgrace !
 Fall back upon a name ! rest, rot in that !
 Not *keep* it noble, make it nobler ? fools,
 With such a vantage-ground for nobleness !
 He had known a man, a quintessence of
 man,
 The life of all—who madly loved—and he,
 Thwarted by one of these old father-fools,
 Had rioted his life out, and made an end.
 He would not do it ! her sweet face and
 faith
 Held him from that : but he had powers,
 he knew it :
 Back would he to his studies, make a name,
 Name, fortune too : the world should ring
 of him
 To shame these mouldy Aylmers in their
 graves :
 Chancellor, or what is greatest would he
 be—
 'O brother, I am grieved to learn your
 grief—
 Give me my fling, and let me say my say.'

At which, like one that sees his own
 excess,
 And easily forgives it as his own,
 He laugh'd ; and then was mute ; but
 presently
 Wept like a storm : and honest Averill
 seeing

How low his brother's mood had fallen,
fetch'd

His richest beeswing from a binn reserved
For banquets, praised the waning red, and
told

The vintage—when *this* Aylmer came of
age—

Then drank and past it ; till at length the
two,

Tho' Leolin flamed and fell again, agreed
That much allowance must be made for
men.

After an angry dream this kindlier glow
Faded with morning, but his purpose held.

Yet once by night again the lovers met,
A perilous meeting under the tall pines
That darken'd all the northward of her
Hall.

Him, to her meek and modest bosom prest
In agony, she promised that no force,
Persuasion, no, nor death could alter her :
He, passionately hopefuller, would go,
Labour for his own Edith, and return
In such a sunlight of prosperity
He should not be rejected. 'Write to
me !

They loved me, and because I love their
child

They hate me : there is war between us,
dear,

Which breaks all bonds but ours ; we
must remain

Sacred to one another.' So they talk'd,
Poor children, for their comfort : the wind
blew ;

The rain of heaven, and their own bitter
tears,

Tears, and the careless rain of heaven,
mixt

Upon their faces, as they kiss'd each other
In darkness, and above them roar'd the pine.

So Leolin went ; and as we task our-
selves

To learn a language known but smatter-
ingly

In phrases here and there at random,
toil'd

Mastering the lawless science of our law,
That codeless myriad of precedent,
That wilderness of single instances,
Thro' which a few, by wit or fortune led,
May beat a pathway out to wealth and
fame.

The jests, that flash'd about the pleader's
room,

Lightning of the hour, the pun, the
scurrilous tale,—

Old scandals buried now seven decads deep
In other scandals that have lived and died,
And left the living scandal that shall die—
Were dead to him already ; bent as he was
To make disproof of scorn, and strong in
hopes,

And prodigal of all brain-labour he,
Charier of sleep, and wine, and exercise,
Except when for a breathing-while at eve,
Some niggard fraction of an hour, he ran
Beside the river-bank : and then indeed
Harder the times were, and the hands of
power

Were bloodier, and the according hearts
of men

Seem'd harder too ; but the soft river-
breeze,

Which fann'd the gardens of that rival rose
Yet fragrant in a heart remembering
His former talks with Edith, on him
breathed

Far purelier in his rushings to and fro,
After his books, to flush his blood with
air,

Then to his books again. My lady's
cousin,

Half-sickening of his pension'd afternoon,
Drove in upon the student once or twice,
Ran a Malayan amuck against the times,
Had golden hopes for France and all
mankind,

Answer'd all queries touching those at
home

With a heaved shoulder and a saucy smile,
And fain had haled him out into the
world,

And air'd him there : his nearer friend
would say

'Screw not the chord too sharply lest it
snap.'

Then left alone he pluck'd her dagger
 forth
 From where his worldless heart had kept
 it warm,
 Kissing his vows upon it like a knight.
 And wrinkled benchers often talk'd of
 him
 Approvingly, and prophesied his rise :
 For heart, I think, help'd head : her
 letters too,
 Tho' far between, and coming fitfully
 Like broken music, written as she found
 Or made occasion, being strictly watch'd,
 Charm'd him thro' every labyrinth till he
 saw
 An end, a hope, a light breaking upon him.

But they that cast her spirit into flesh,
 Her worldly-wise begetters, plagued them-
 selves

To sell her, those good parents, for her
 good.

Whatever eldest-born of rank or wealth
 Might lie within their compass, him they
 lured

Into their net made pleasant by the baits
 Of gold and beauty, wooing him to woo.
 So month by month the noise about their
 doors,

And distant blaze of those dull banquets,
 made

The nightly wirer of their innocent hare
 Falter before he took it. All in vain.
 Sullen, defiant, pitying, wroth, return'd
 Leolin's rejected rivals from their suit
 So often, that the folly taking wings
 Slipt o'er those lazy limits down the wind
 With rumour, and became in other fields
 A mockery to the yeomen over ale,
 And laughter to their lords : but those at
 home,

As hunters round a hunted creature draw
 The cordon close and closer toward the
 death,

Narrow'd her goings out and comings in ;
 Forbad her first the house of Averill,
 Then closed her access to the wealthier
 farms,

Last from her own home-circle of the
 poor

They barr'd her : yet she bore it : yet her
 cheek

Kept colour : wondrous ! but, O mystery !
 What amulet drew her down to that old
 oak,

So old, that twenty years before, a part
 Falling had let appear the brand of John—
 Once grovelike, each huge arm a tree,
 but now

The broken base of a black tower, a cave
 Of touchwood, with a single flourishing
 spray.

There the manorial lord too curiously
 Raking in that millennial touchwood-dust
 Found for himself a bitter treasure-trove ;
 Burst his own wyvern on the seal, and read
 Writhing a letter from his child, for which
 Came at the moment Leolin's emissary,
 A crippled lad, and coming turn'd to fly,
 But scared with threats of jail and halter
 gave

To him that fluster'd his poor parish wits
 The letter which he brought, and swore
 besides

To play their go-between as heretofore
 Nor let them know themselves betray'd ;
 and then,

Soul-stricken at their kindness to him,
 went

Hating his own lean heart and miserable.

Thenceforward oft from out a despot
 dream

The father panting woke, and oft, as dawn
 Aroused the black republic on his elms,
 Sweeping the frothfly from the fescue
 brush'd

Thro' the dim meadow toward his
 treasure-trove,

Seized it, took home, and to my lady,—
 who made

A downward crescent of her minion mouth,
 Listless in all despondence,—read ; and
 tore,

As if the living passion symbol'd there
 Were living nerves to feel the rent ; and
 burnt,

Now chafing at his own great self defied,
 Now striking on huge stumbling-blocks of
 scorn

In babyisms, and dear diminutives
 Scatter'd all over the vocabulary
 Of such a love as like a chidden child,
 After much wailing, hush'd itself at last
 Hopeless of answer: then tho' Averill wrote
 And bad him with good heart sustain
 himself—

All would be well—the lover heeded not,
 But passionately restless came and went,
 And rustling once at night about the place,
 There by a keeper shot at, slightly hurt,
 Raging return'd: nor was it well for her
 Kept to the garden now, and grove of pines,
 Watch'd even there; and one was set to
 watch

The watcher, and Sir Aylmer watch'd
 them all,

Yet bitterer from his readings: once
 indeed,

Warm'd with his wines, or taking pride
 in her,

She look'd so sweet, he kiss'd her tenderly
 Not knowing what possess'd him: that
 one kiss

Was Leolin's one strong rival upon earth;
 Seconded, for my lady follow'd suit,
 Seem'd hope's returning rose: and then
 ensued

A Martin's summer of his faded love,
 Or ordeal by kindness; after this
 He seldom crost his child without a sneer;
 The mother flow'd in shallower acrimo-
 nies:

Never one kindly smile, one kindly word:
 So that the gentle creature shut from all
 Her charitable use, and face to face
 With twenty months of silence, slowly lost
 Nor greatly cared to lose, her hold on life.
 Last, some low fever ranging round to spy
 The weakness of a people or a house,
 Like flies that haunt a wound, or deer, or
 men,

Or almost all that is, hurting the hurt—
 Save Christ as we believe him—found the
 girl

And flung her down upon a couch of fire,
 Where careless of the household faces near,
 And crying upon the name of Leolin,
 She, and with her the race of Aylmer,
 past.

Star to star vibrates light: may soul
 to soul

Strike thro' a finer element of her own?
 So,—from afar,—touch as at once? or
 why

That night, that moment, when she named
 his name,

Did the keen shriek 'Yes love, yes, Edith,
 yes,'

Shrill, till the comrade of his chambers
 woke,

And came upon him half-arisen from sleep,
 With a weird bright eye, sweating and
 trembling,

His hair as it were crackling into flames,
 His body half flung forward in pursuit,
 And his long arms stretch'd as to grasp a
 flyer:

Nor knew he wherefore he had made the
 cry;

And being much befooled and idioted
 By the rough amity of the other, sank
 As into sleep again. The second day,
 My lady's Indian kinsman rushing in,
 A breaker of the bitter news from home,
 Found a dead man, a letter edged with
 death

Beside him, and the dagger which himself
 Gave Edith, redden'd with no bandit's
 blood:

'From Edith' was engraven on the blade.

Then Averill went and gazed upon his
 death.

And when he came again, his flock be-
 lieved—

Beholding how the years which are not
 Time's

Had blasted him—that many thousand
 days

Were clipt by horror from his term of life.
 Yet the sad mother, for the second death
 Scarce touch'd her thro' that nearness of
 the first,

And being used to find her pastor texts,
 Sent to the harrow'd brother, praying
 him

To speak before the people of her child,
 And fixt the Sabbath. Darkly that day
 rose:

Autumn's mock sunshine of the faded
woods
Was all the life of it ; for hard on these,
A breathless burthen of low-folded heavens
Stifled and chill'd at once ; but every roof
Sent out a listener : many too had known
Edith among the hamlets round, and
since
The parents' harshness and the hapless
loves
And double death were widely murmur'd,
left
Their own gray tower, or plain-faced
tabernacle,
To hear him ; all in mourning these, and
those
With blots of it about them, ribbon, glove
Or kerchief ; while the church, — one
night, except
For greenish glimmerings thro' the lancets,
—made
Still paler the pale head of him, who
tower'd
Above them, with his hopes in either
grave.

Long o'er his bent brows linger'd
Averill,
His face magnetic to the hand from which
Livid he pluck'd it forth, and labour'd
thro'
His brief prayer-prelude, gave the verse
' Behold,
Your house is left unto you desolate !'
But lapsed into so long a pause again
As half amazed half frightened all his flock :
Then from his height and loneliness of
grief
Bore down in flood, and dash'd his angry
heart
Against the desolations of the world.

Never since our bad earth became one
sea,
Which rolling o'er the palaces of the
proud,
And all but those who knew the living
God—
Eight that were left to make a purer
world—

When since had flood, fire, earthquake,
thunder, wrought
Such waste and havock as the idolatries,
Which from the low light of mortality
Shot up their shadows to the Heaven of
Heavens,
And worshipt their own darkness in the
Highest ?
' Gash thyself, priest, and honour thy
brute Baäl,
And to thy worst self sacrifice thyself,
For with thy worst self hast thou clothed
thy God.
Then came a Lord in no wise like to
Baäl.
The babe shall lead the lion. Surely now
The wilderness shall blossom as the rose.
Crown thyself, worm, and worship thine
own lusts !—
No coarse and blockish God of acreage
Stands at thy gate for thee to grovel to—
Thy God is far diffused in noble groves
And princely halls, and farms, and flowing
lawns,
And heaps of living gold that daily grow,
And title-scrolls and gorgeous heraldries.
In such a shape dost thou behold thy
God.
Thou wilt not gash thy flesh for *him* ; for
thine
Fares richly, in fine linen, not a hair
Ruffled upon the scarfskin, even while
The deathless ruler of thy dying house
Is wounded to the death that cannot die ;
And tho' thou numberest with the followers
Of One who cried, "Leave all and follow
me."
Thee therefore with His light about thy
feet,
Thee with His message ringing in thine
ears,
Thee shall thy brother man, the Lord from
Heaven,
Born of a village girl, carpenter's son,
Wonderful, Prince of peace, the Mighty
God,
Count the more base idolater of the two ;
Crueller : as not passing thro' the fire
Bodies, but souls—thy children's—thro'
the smoke,

The blight of low desires—darkening
thine own

To thine own likeness ; or if one of these,
Thy better born unhappily from thee,
Should, as by miracle, grow straight and
fair—

Friends, I was bid to speak of such a one
By those who most have cause to sorrow
for her—

Fairer than Rachel by the palmy well,
Fairer than Ruth among the fields of corn,
Fair as the Angel that said "Hail!" she
seem'd,

Who entering fill'd the house with sudden
light.

For so mine own was brighten'd : where
indeed

The roof so lowly but that beam of
Heaven

Dawn'd sometime thro' the doorway?
whose the babe

Too ragged to be fondled on her lap,
Warm'd at her bosom? The poor child
of shame

The common care whom no one cared
for, leapt

To greet her, wasting his forgotten heart,
As with the mother he had never known,
In gambols ; for her fresh and innocent
eyes

Had such a star of morning in their blue,
That all neglected places of the field
Broke into nature's music when they saw
her.

Low was her voice, but won mysterious
way

Thro' the seal'd ear to which a louder
one

Was all but silence—free of alms her
hand—

The hand that robed your cottage-walls
with flowers

Has often toil'd to clothe your little ones ;
How often placed upon the sick man's
brow

Cool'd it, or laid his feverous pillow
smooth!

Had you one sorrow and she shared it
not?

One burthen and she would not lighten it?

One spiritual doubt she did not soothe?
Or when some heat of difference sparkled
out,

How sweetly would she glide between
your wraths,

And steal you from each other ! for she
walk'd

Wearing the light yoke of that Lord of
love,

Who still'd the rolling wave of Galilee !
And one—of him I was not bid to
speak—

Was always with her, whom you also
knew.

Him too you loved, for he was worthy
love.

And these had been together from the
first ;

They might have been together till the
last.

Friends, this frail bark of ours, when
sorely tried,

May wreck itself without the pilot's guilt,
Without the captain's knowledge : hope
with me.

Whose shame is that, if he went hence
with shame?

Nor mine the fault, if losing both of these
I cry to vacant chairs and widow'd walls,
"My house is left unto me desolate."

While thus he spoke, his hearers wept ;
but some,

Sons of the glebe, with other frowns than
those

That knit themselves for summer shadow,
scowl'd

At their great lord. He, when it seem'd
he saw

No pale sheet-lightnings from afar, but
fork'd

Of the near storm, and aiming at his
head,

Sat anger-charm'd from sorrow, soldier-
like,

Erect : but when the preacher's cadence
flow'd

Softening thro' all the gentle attributes
Of his lost child, the wife, who watch'd
his face,

Paled at a sudden twitch of his iron
mouth ;

And 'O pray God that he hold up' she
thought

'Or surely I shall shame myself and him.'

'Nor yours the blame—for who beside
your hearths

Can take her place—if echoing me you
cry

"Our house is left unto us desolate"?

But thou, O thou that killest, hadst thou
known,

O thou that stonest, hadst thou under-
stood

The things belonging to thy peace and
ours !

Is there no prophet but the voice that
calls

Doom upon kings, or in the waste "Re-
pent" ?

Is not our own child on the narrow way,
Who down to those that saunter in the
broad

Cries "Come up hither," as a prophet to
us ?

Is there no stoning save with flint and
rock ?

Yes, as the dead we weep for testify—

No desolation but by sword and fire ?

Yes, as your moanings witness, and my-
self

Am lonelier, darker, earthlier for my loss.

Give me your prayers, for he is past your
prayers,

Not past the living fount of pity in
Heaven.

But I that thought myself long-suffering,
meek,

Exceeding "poor in spirit"—how the
words

Have twisted back upon themselves, and
mean

Vileness, we are grown so proud—I
wish'd my voice

A rushing tempest of the wrath of God

To blow these sacrifices thro' the world—

Sent like the twelve-divided concubine

To inflame the tribes : but there—out
yonder—earth

Lightens from her own central Hell—O
there

The red fruit of an old idolatry—

The heads of chiefs and princes fall so
fast,

They cling together in the ghastly sack—

The land all shambles—naked marriages

Flash from the bridge, and ever-murder'd

France,

By shores that darken with the gathering
wolf,

Runs in a river of blood to the sick sea.

Is this a time to madden madness then ?

Was this a time for these to flaunt their
pride ?

May Pharaoh's darkness, folds as dense
as those

Which hid the Holiest from the people's
eyes

Ere the great death, shroud this great sin
from all !

Doubtless our narrow world must canvass
it :

O rather pray for those and pity them,

Who, thro' their own desire accomplish'd,
bring

Their own gray hairs with sorrow to the
grave—

Who broke the bond which they desired
to break,

Which else had link'd their race with
times to come—

Who wove coarse webs to snare her
purity,

Grossly contriving their dear daughter's
good—

Poor souls, and knew not what they did,
but sat

Ignorant, devising their own daughter's
death !

May not that earthly chastisement suffice ?

Have not our love and reverence left
them bare ?

Will not another take their heritage ?

Will there be children's laughter in their
hall

For ever and for ever, or one stone

Left on another, or is it a light thing

That I, their guest, their host, their
ancient friend,

I made by these the last of all my race,
Must cry to these the last of theirs, as
cried

Christ ere His agony to those that swore
Not by the temple but the gold, and made
Their own traditions God, and slew the
Lord,

And left their memories a world's curse—
“Behold,
Your house is left unto you desolate”?’

Ended he had not, but she brook'd no
more :

Long since her heart had beat remorse-
lessly,

Her cramp't-up sorrow pain'd her, and a
sense

Of meanness in her unresisting life.
Then their eyes vex't her ; for on entering
He had cast the curtains of their seat
aside—

Black velvet of the costliest—she herself
Had seen to that : fain had she closed
them now,

Yet dared not stir to do it, only near'd
Her husband inch by inch, but when she
laid,

Wifelike, her hand in one of his, he veil'd
His face with the other, and at once, as
falls

A creeper when the prop is broken, fell
The woman shrieking at his feet, and
swoon'd.

Then her own people bore along the nave
Her pendent hands, and narrow meagre
face

Seam'd with the shallow cares of fifty
years :

And her the Lord of all the landscape
round

Ev'n to its last horizon, and of all
Who peer'd at him so keenly, follow'd
out

Tall and erect, but in the middle aisle
Reel'd, as a footsore ox in crowded
ways

Stumbling across the market to his death,
Unpitied ; for he groped as blind, and
seem'd

Always about to fall, grasping the pews

And oaken finials till he touch'd the
door ;

Yet to the lychgate, where his chariot
stood,

Strode from the porch, tall and erect
again.

But nevermore did either pass the gate
Save under pall with bearers. In one
month,

Thro' weary and yet ever wearier hours,
The childless mother went to seek her
child ;

And when he felt the silence of his house
About him, and the change and not the
change,

And those fixt eyes of painted ancestors
Staring for ever from their gilded walls
On him their last descendant, his own
head

Began to droop, to fall ; the man became
Imbecile ; his one word was ‘desolate’ ;
Dead for two years before his death was
he ;

But when the second Christmas came,
escaped

His keepers, and the silence which he felt,
To find a deeper in the narrow gloom
By wife and child ; nor wanted at his
end

The dark retinue reverencing death
At golden thresholds ; nor from tender
hearts,

And those who sorrow'd o'er a vanish'd
race,

Pity, the violet on the tyrant's grave.
Then the great Hall was wholly broken
down,

And the broad woodland parcell'd into
farms ;

And where the two contrived their
daughter's good,

Lies the hawk's cast, the mole has made
his run,

The hedgehog underneath the plantain
bores,

The rabbit fondles his own harmless face,
The slow-worm creeps, and the thin
weasel there

Follows the mouse, and all is open field.

SEA DREAMS

A CITY clerk, but gently born and bred ;
His wife, an unknown artist's orphan
child—

One babe were theirs, a Margaret, three
years old :

They, thinking that her clear germander
eye

Droopt in the giant-factored city-gloom,
Came, with a month's leave given them,
to the sea :

For which his gains were dock'd, however
small :

Small were his gains, and hard his work ;
besides,

Their slender household fortunes (for the
man

Had risk'd his little) like the little thrift,
Trembled in perilous places o'er a deep :
And oft, when sitting all alone, his face
Would darken, as he cursed his credulous-
ness,

And that one unctuous mouth which lured
him, rogue,

To buy strange shares in some Peruvian
mine.

Now seaward-bound for health they gain'd
a coast,

All sand and cliff and deep-inrunning cave,
At close of day ; slept, woke, and went
the next,

The Sabbath, pious variers from the
church,

To chapel ; where a heated pulpiteer,
Not preachingsimple Christ to simple men,
Announced the coming doom, and ful-
minated

Against the scarlet woman and her creed ;
For sideways up he swung his arms, and
shriek'd

'Thus, thus with violence,' ev'n as if he
held

The Apocalyptic millstone, and himself
Were that great Angel ; 'Thus with
violence

Shall Babylon be cast into the sea ;
Then comes the close.' The gentle-
hearted wife

Sat shuddering at the ruin of a world ;
He at his own : but when the wordy storm
Had ended, forth they came and paced
the shore,

Ran in and out the long sea-framing caves,
Drank the large air, and saw, but scarce
believed

(The sootflake of so many a summer still
Clung to their fancies) that they saw, the sea.
So now on sand they walk'd, and now on
cliff,

Lingering about the thymy promontories,
Till all the sails were darken'd in the west,
And rosed in the east : then homeward and
to bed :

Where she, who kept a tender Christian
hope,

Haunting a holy text, and still to that
Returning, as the bird returns, at night,
'Let not the sun go down upon your
wrath,'

Said, 'Love, forgive him' : but he did not
speak ;

And silenced by that silence lay the wife,
Remembering her dear Lord who died for
all,

And musing on the little lives of men,
And how they mar this little by their feuds.

But while the two were sleeping, a full
tide

Rose with ground-swell, which, on the
foremost rocks

Touching, upjetted in spirts of wild sea-
smoke,

And scaled in sheets of wasteful foam, and
fell

In vast sea-cataracts—ever and anon
Dead claps of thunder from within the cliffs
Heard thro' the living roar. At this the
babe,

Their Margaret cradled near them, wail'd
and woke

The mother, and the father suddenly cried,
'A wreck, a wreck !' then turn'd, and
groaning said,

'Forgive ! How many will say, "for-
give," and find

A sort of absolution in the sound

To hate a little longer ! No ; the sin
That neither God nor man can well for-
give,

Hypocrisy, I saw it in him at once.
Is it so true that second thoughts are best ?
Not first, and third, which are a riper first ?
Too ripe, too late ! they come too late
for use.

Ah love, there surely lives in man and
beast

Something divine to warn them of their
foes :

And such a sense, when first I fronted him,
Said, " Trust him not " ; but after, when
I came

To know him more, I lost it, knew him
less ;

Fought with what seem'd my own un-
charity ;

Sat at his table ; drank his costly wines ;
Made more and more allowance for his
talk ;

Went further, fool ! and trusted him with
all,

All my poor scrapings from a dozen years
Of dust and deskwork : there is no such
mine,

None ; but a gulf of ruin, swallowing gold,
Not making. Ruin'd ! ruin'd ! the sea
roars

Ruin : a fearful night !

' Not fearful ; fair,'
Said the good wife, ' if every star in
heaven

Can make it fair : you do but hear the tide.
Had you ill dreams ?'

' O yes,' he said, ' I dream'd
Of such a tide swelling toward the land,
And I from out the boundless outer deep
Swept with it to the shore, and enter'd one
Of those dark caves that run beneath the
cliffs.

I thought the motion of the boundless deep
Bore thro' the cave, and I was heaved
upon it

In darkness : then I saw one lovely star
Larger and larger. " What a world," I
thought,

" To live in !" but in moving on I found
Only the landward exit of the cave,
Bright with the sun upon the stream
beyond :

And near the light a giant woman sat,
All over earthy, like a piece of earth,
A pickaxe in her hand : then out I slipt
Into a land all sun and blossom, trees
As high as heaven, and every bird that
sings :

And here the night-light flickering in my
eyes
Awoke me.'

' That was then your dream,' she said,
' Not sad, but sweet.'

' So sweet, I lay,' said he,
' And mused upon it, drifting up the
stream

In fancy, till I slept again, and pieced
The broken vision ; for I dream'd that still
The motion of the great deep bore me on,
And that the woman walk'd upon the
brink :

I wonder'd at her strength, and ask'd her
of it :

" It came," she said, " by working in the
mines :"

O then to ask her of my shares, I thought ;
And ask'd ; but not a word ; she shook
her head.

And then the motion of the current ceased,
And there was rolling thunder ; and we
reach'd

A mountain, like a wall of burs and
thorns ;

But she with her strong feet up the steep
hill

Trod out a path : I follow'd ; and at top
She pointed seaward : there a fleet of
glass,

That seem'd a fleet of jewels under me,
Sailing along before a gloomy cloud
That not one moment ceased to thunder,
past

In sunshine : right across its track there lay,
Down in the water, a long reef of gold,
Or what seem'd gold : and I was glad at
first

To think that in our often-ransack'd world
Still so much gold was left ; and then I
fear'd

Lest the gay navy there should splinter
on it,

And fearing waved my arm to warn them
off ;

An idle signal, for the brittle fleet
(I thought I could have died to save it)
near'd,

Touch'd, clink'd, and clash'd, and
vanish'd, and I woke,

I heard the clash so clearly. Now I see
My dream was Life ; the woman honest
Work ;

And my poor venture but a fleet of glass
Wreck'd on a reef of visionary gold.'

'Nay,' said the kindly wife to comfort
him,

'You raised your arm, you tumbled down
and broke

The glass with little Margaret's medicine
in it ;

And, breaking that, you made and broke
your dream :

A trifle makes a dream, a trifle breaks.'

'No trifle,' groan'd the husband ;
'yesterday

I met him suddenly in the street, and ask'd
That which I ask'd the woman in my
dream.

Like her, he shook his head. "Show me
the books !"

He dodged me with a long and loose
account.

"The books, the books !" but he, he could
not wait,

Bound on a matter he of life and death :
When the great Books (see Daniel seven
and ten)

Were open'd, I should find he meant me
well ;

And then began to bloat himself, and ooze
All over with the fat affectionate smile

That makes the widow lean. "My dearest
friend,

Have faith, have faith ! We live by faith,"
said he ;

"And all things work together for the good
Of those"—it makes me sick to quote him
—last

Gript my hand hard, and with God-bless-
you went.

I stood like one that had received a blow :
I found a hard friend in his loose accounts,
A loose one in the hard grip of his hand,
A curse in his God-bless-you : then my
eyes

Pursued him down the street, and far
away,

Among the honest shoulders of the crowd,
Read rascal in the motions of his back,
And scoundrel in the supple-sliding knee.'

'Was he so bound, poor soul?' said
the good wife ;

'So are we all : but do not call him, love,
Before you prove him, rogue, and proved,
forgive.

His gain is loss ; for he that wrongs his
friend

Wrongs himself more, and ever bears
about

A silent court of justice in his breast,
Himself the judge and jury, and himself.
The prisoner at the bar, ever condemn'd :
And that drags down his life : then comes
what comes

Hereafter : and he meant, he said he
meant,

Perhaps he meant, or partly meant, you
well.'

"With all his conscience and one eye
askew"—

Love, let me quote these lines, that you
may learn

A man is likewise counsel for himself,
Too often, in that silent court of yours—
"With all his conscience and one eye
askew,

So false, he partly took himself for true ;
Whose pious talk, when most his heart
was dry,

Made wet the crafty crowsfoot round his
eye ;

Who, never naming God except for gain,
So never took that useful name in vain,

Made Him his catspaw and the Cross his
 tool,
 And Christ the bait to trap his dupe and
 fool ;
 Nor deeds of gift, but gifts of grace he
 forged,
 And snake-like slimed his victim ere he
 gorged ;
 And oft at Bible meetings, o'er the rest
 Arising, did his holy oily best,
 Dropping the too rough H in Hell and
 Heaven,
 To spread the Word by which himself
 had thriven."
 How like you this old satire ?'

'Nay,' she said,
 'I loathe it : he had never kindly heart,
 Nor ever cared to better his own kind,
 Who first wrote satire, with no pity in it.
 But will you hear *my* dream, for I had one
 That altogether went to music ? Still
 It awed me.'

Then she told it, having dream'd
 Of that same coast.

—But round the North, a light,
 A belt, it seem'd, of luminous vapour, lay,
 And ever in it a low musical note
 Swell'd up and died ; and, as it swell'd,
 a ridge
 Of breaker issued from the belt, and still
 Grew with the growing note, and when
 the note
 Had reach'd a thunderous fulness, on
 those cliffs
 Broke, mixt with awful light (the same as
 that
 Living within the belt) whereby she saw
 That all those lines of cliffs were cliffs no
 more,
 But huge cathedral fronts of every age,
 Grave, florid, stern, as far as eye could see,
 One after one : and then the great ridge
 drew,
 Lessening to the lessening music, back,
 And past into the belt and swell'd again
 Slowly to music : ever when it broke
 The statues, king or saint, or founder fell ;

Then from the gaps and chasms of ruin
 left
 Came men and women in dark clusters
 round,
 Some crying, 'Set them up ! they shall
 not fall !'
 And others, 'Let them lie, for they have
 fall'n.'
 And still they strove and wrangled : and
 she grieved
 In her strange dream, she knew not why,
 to find
 Their wildest wailings never out of tune
 With that sweet note ; and ever as their
 shrieks
 Ran highest up the gamut, that great wave
 Returning, while none mark'd it, on the
 crowd
 Broke, mixt with awful light, and show'd
 their eyes
 Glaring, and passionate looks, and swept
 away
 The men of flesh and blood, and men of
 stone,
 To the waste deeps together.

'Then I fixt
 My wistful eyes on two fair images,
 Both crown'd with stars and high among
 the stars,—
 The Virgin Mother standing with her
 child
 High up on one of those dark minster-
 fronts—
 Till she began to totter, and the child
 Clung to the mother, and sent out a cry
 Which mixt with little Margaret's, and I
 woke,
 And my dream awed me :—well—but
 what are dreams ?
 Yours came but from the breaking of a
 glass,
 And mine but from the crying of a
 child.'

'Child ? No !' said he, 'but this tide's
 roar, and his,
 Our Boanerges with his threats of doom,
 And loud-lung'd Antibabylonianisms
 (Altho' I grant but little music there)

Went both to make your dream : but if
there were

A music harmonizing our wild cries,
Sphere-music such as that you dream'd
about,

Why, that would make our passions far
too like

The discords dear to the musician. No—
One shriek of hate would jar all the hymns
of heaven :

True Devils with no ear, they howl in tune
With nothing but the Devil !

“ True ” indeed !

One of our town, but later by an hour
Here than ourselves, spoke with me on
the shore ;

While you were running down the sands,
and made

The dimpled founce of the sea-furbelow
flap,

Good man, to please the child. She
brought strange news.

Why were you silent when I spoke to-
night ?

I had set my heart on your forgiving him
Before you knew. We *must* forgive the
dead.’

‘ Dead ! who is dead ? ’

‘ The man your eye pursued.
A little after you had parted with him,
He suddenly dropt dead of heart-disease.’

‘ Dead ? he ? of heart-disease ? what
heart had he
To die of ? dead ! ’

‘ Ah, dearest, if there be
A devil in man, there is an angel too,
And if he did that wrong you charge him
with,

His angel broke his heart. But your
rough voice
(You spoke so loud) has roused the child
again.

Sleep, little birdie, sleep ! will she not
sleep

Without her “ little birdie ” ? well then,
sleep,

And I will sing you “ birdie.” ’

Saying this,

The woman half turn'd round from him
she loved,

Left him one hand, and reaching thro'
the night

Her other, found (for it was close be-
side)

And half-embraced the basket cradle-
head

With one soft arm, which, like the pliant
bough

That moving moves the nest and nestling,
sway'd

The cradle, while she sang this baby song.

What does little birdie say
In her nest at peep of day ?
Let me fly, says little birdie,
Mother, let me fly away.
Birdie, rest a little longer,
Till the little wings are stronger.
So she rests a little longer,
Then she flies away.

What does little baby say,
In her bed at peep of day ?
Baby says, like little birdie,
Let me rise and fly away.
Baby, sleep a little longer,
Till the little limbs are stronger.
If she sleeps a little longer,
Baby too shall fly away.

‘ She sleeps : let us too, let all evil,
sleep.
He also sleeps—another sleep than
ours.

He can do no more wrong : forgive him,
dear,

And I shall sleep the sounder ! ’

Then the man,
‘ His deeds yet live, the worst is yet to
come.

Yet let your sleep for this one night be
sound :

I do forgive him ! ’

‘ Thanks, my love,’ she said,
‘ Your own will be the sweeter,’ and they
slept.

LUCRETIUS

LUCILIA, wedded to Lucretius, found
 Her master cold ; for when the morning
 flush
 Of passion and the first embrace had died
 Between them, tho' he lov'd her none the
 less,
 Yet often when the woman heard his foot
 Return from pacings in the field, and ran
 To greet him with a kiss, the master took
 Small notice, or austere, for—his mind
 Half buried in some weightier argument,
 Or fancy-borne perhaps upon the rise
 And long roll of the Hexameter—he past
 To turn and ponder those three hundred
 scrolls
 Left by the Teacher, whom he held divine.
 She brook'd it not ; but wrathful, petulant,
 Dreaming some rival, sought and found
 a witch
 Who brew'd the philtre which had power,
 they said,
 To lead an errant passion home again.
 And this, at times, she mingled with his
 drink,
 And this destroy'd him ; for the wicked
 broth
 Confused the chemic labour of the blood,
 And tickling the brute brain within the
 man's
 Made havock among those tender cells,
 and check'd
 His power to shape : he loathed himself ;
 and once
 After a tempest woke upon a morn
 That mock'd him with returning calm,
 and cried :

‘Storm in the night ! for thrice I heard
 the rain
 Rushing ; and once the flash of a
 thunderbolt—
 Methought I never saw so fierce a fork—
 Struck out the streaming mountain-side,
 and show'd
 A riotous confluence of watercourses
 Blanching and billowing in a hollow of it,
 Where all but yester-eve was dusty-dry.

‘Storm, and what dreams, ye holy
 Gods, what dreams !
 For thrice I waken'd after dreams. Per-
 chance
 We do but recollect the dreams that come
 Just ere the waking : terrible ! for it seem'd
 A void was made in Nature ; all her bonds
 Crack'd ; and I saw the flaring atom-
 streams
 And torrents of her myriad universe,
 Ruining along the illimitable inane,
 Fly on to clash together again, and make
 Another and another frame of things
 For ever : that was mine, my dream, I
 knew it—
 Of and belonging to me, as the dog
 With inward yelp and restless forefoot
 plies
 His function of the woodland : but the
 next !
 I thought that all the blood by Sylla shed
 Came driving rainlike down again on
 earth,
 And where it dash'd the reddening mea-
 dow, sprang
 No dragon warriors from Cadmean teeth,
 For these I thought my dream would
 show to me,
 But girls, Hetairai, curious in their art,
 Hired animalisms, vile as those that made
 The mulberry-faced Dictator's orgies
 worse
 Than aught they fable of the quiet Gods.
 And hands they mixt, and yell'd and
 round me drove
 In narrowing circles till I yell'd again
 Half-suffocated, and sprang up, and saw—
 Was it the first beam of my latest day ?

‘Then, then, from utter gloom stood
 out the breasts,
 The breasts of Helen, and hoveringly a
 sword
 Now over and now under, now direct,
 Pointed itself to pierce, but sank down
 shamed
 At all that beauty ; and as I stared, a fire,
 The fire that left a roofless Ilion,
 Shot out of them, and scorch'd me that
 I woke.

'Is this thy vengeance, holy Venus,
thine,
Because I would not one of thine own
doves,
Not ev'n a rose, were offer'd to thee?
thine,
Forgetful how my rich procemion makes
Thy glory fly along the Italian field,
In lays that will outlast thy Deity?

'Deity? nay, thy worshippers. My
tongue
Trips, or I speak profanely. Which of
these
Angers thee most, or angers thee at all?
Not if thou be'st of those who, far aloof
From envy, hate and pity, and spite and
scorn,
Live the great life which all our greatest
fain
Would follow, center'd in eternal calm.

'Nay, if thou canst, O Goddess, like
ourselves
Touch, and be touch'd, then would I cry
to thee
To kiss thy Mavors, roll thy tender arms
Round him, and keep him from the lust
of blood
That makes a steaming slaughter-house
of Rome.

'Ay, but I meant not thee; I meant
not her,
Whom all the pines of Ida shook to see
Slide from that quiet heaven of hers, and
tempt
The Trojan, while his neat-herds were
abroad;
Nor her that o'er her wounded hunter
wept
Her Deity false in human-amorous tears;
Nor whom her beardless apple-arbiter
Decided fairest. Rather, O ye Gods,
Poet-like, as the great Sicilian called
Calliope to grace his golden verse—
Ay, and this Kypris also—did I take
That popular name of thine to shadow
forth
The all-generating powers and genial heat

Of Nature, when she strikes thro' the
thick blood
Of cattle, and light is large, and lambs
are glad
Nosing the mother's udder, and the bird
Makes his heart voice amid the blaze of
flowers:
Which things appear the work of mighty
Gods.

'The Gods! and if I go *my* work is
left
Unfinish'd—*if* I go. The Gods, who
haunt
The lucid interspace of world and world,
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a
wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of
snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans,
Nor sound of human sorrow mounts to
mar
Their sacred everlasting calm! and such,
Not all so fine, nor so divine a calm,
Not such, nor all unlike it, man may gain
Letting his own life go. The Gods, the
Gods!
If all be atoms, how then should the
Gods
Being atomic not be dissoluble,
Not follow the great law? My master
held
That Gods there are, for all men so
believe.
I prest my footsteps into his, and meant
Surely to lead my Memmius in a train
Of flowery clauses onward to the proof
That Gods there are, and deathless.
Meant? I meant?
I have forgotten what I meant: my mind
Stumbles, and all my faculties are lamed.

'Look where another of our Gods, the
Sun,
Apollo, Delius, or of older use
All-seeing Hyperion—what you will—
Has mounted yonder; since he never
sware,
Except his wrath were wreak'd on
wretched man,

That he would only shine among the dead
Hereafter ; tales ! for never yet on earth
Could dead flesh creep, or bits of roast-
ing ox

Moan round the spit—nor knows he
what he sees ;

King of the East altho' he seem, and girt
With song and flame and fragrance, slowly
lifts

His golden feet on those empurpled stairs
That climb into the windy halls of
heaven :

And here he glances on an eye new-born,
And gets for greeting but a wail of pain ;
And here he stays upon a freezing orb
That fain would gaze upon him to the
last ;

And here upon a yellow eyelid fall'n
And closed by those who mourn a friend
in vain,

Not thankful that his troubles are no
more.

And me, altho' his fire is on my face
Blinding, he sees not, nor at all can tell
Whether I mean this day to end myself,
Or lend an ear to Plato where he says,
That men like soldiers may not quit the
post

Allotted by the Gods : but he that holds
The Gods are careless, wherefore need he
care

Greatly for them, nor rather plunge at
once,

Being troubled, wholly out of sight, and
sink

Past earthquake—ay, and gout and stone,
that break

Body toward death, and palsy, death-in-
life,

And wretched age—and worst disease of
all,

These prodigies of myriad nakednesses,
And twisted shapes of lust, unspeakable,
Abominable, strangers at my hearth
Not welcome, harpies miring every dish,
The phantom husks of something foully
done,

And fleeting thro' the boundless universe,
And blasting the long quiet of my breast
With animal heat and dire insanity ?

'How should the mind, except it loved
them, clasp

These idols to herself? or do they fly
Now thinner, and now thicker, like the
flakes

In a fall of snow, and so press in, perforce
Of multitude, as crowds that in an hour
Of civic tumult jam the doors, and bear
The keepers down, and throng, their rags
and they

The basest, far into that council-hall
Where sit the best and stateliest of the
land ?

'Can I not fling this horror off me
again,

Seeing with how great ease Nature can
smile,

Balmier and nobler from her bath of
storm,

At random ravage? and how easily
The mountain there has cast his cloudy
slough,

Now towering o'er him in serenest air,
A mountain o'er a mountain,—ay, and
within

All hollow as the hopes and fears of
men ?

'But who was he, that in the garden
snared

Picus and Faunus, rustic Gods? a tale
To laugh at—more to laugh at in myself—
For look ! what is it? there? yon arbutus
Totters ; a noiseless riot underneath
Strikes through the wood, sets all the
tops quivering—

The mountain quickens into Nymph and
Faun ;

And here an Oread—how the sun delights
To glance and shift about her slippery
sides,

And rosy knees and supple roundedness,
And budded bosom-peaks—who this way
runs

Before the rest—A satyr, a satyr, see,
Follows ; but him I proved impossible ;
Twy-natured is no nature : yet he draws
Nearer and nearer, and I scan him now
Beastlier than any phantom of his kind

That ever butted his rough brother-brute
For lust or lusty blood or provender :
I hate, abhor, spit, sicken at him ; and
she

Loathes him as well ; such a precipitate
heel,

Fledged as it were with Mercury's ankle-
wing,

Whirls her to me : but will she fling
herself,

Shameless upon me ? Catch her, goat-
foot : nay,

Hide, hide them, million-myrtled wilder-
ness,

And cavern-shadowing laurels, hide ! do
I wish—

What ?—that the bush were leafless ? or
to whelm

All of them in one massacre ? O ye Gods,
I know you careless, yet, behold, to you
From childly wont and ancient use I
call—

I thought I lived securely as yourselves—
No lewdness, narrowing envy, monkey-
spite,

No madness of ambition, avarice, none :
No larger feast than under plane or pine
With neighbours laid along the grass, to
take

Only such cups as left us friendly-warm,
Affirming each his own philosophy—
Nothing to mar the sober majesties
Of settled, sweet, Epicurean life.

But now it seems some unseen monster
lays

His vast and filthy hands upon my will,
Wrenching it backward into his ; and
spoils

My bliss in being ; and it was not great ;
For save when shutting reasons up in
rhythm,

Or Heliconian honey in living words,
To make a truth less harsh, I often grew
Tired of so much within our little life,
Or of so little in our little life—

Poor little life that toddles half an hour
Crown'd with a flower or two, and there
an end—

And since the nobler pleasure seems to
fade,

Why should I, beastlike as I find myself,
Not manlike end myself ?—our privilege—
What beast has heart to do it ? And what
man,

What Roman would be dragg'd in triumph
thus ?

Not I ; not he, who bears one name with
her

Whose death-blow struck the dateless
doom of kings,

When, brooking not the Tarquin in her
veins,

She made her blood in sight of Collatine
And all his peers, flushing the guiltless
air,

Spout from the maiden fountain in her
heart.

And from it sprang the Commonwealth,
which breaks

As I am breaking now !

‘ And therefore now

Let her, that is the womb and tomb of all,
Great Nature, take, and forcing far apart
Those blind beginnings that have made
me man,

Dash them anew together at her will
Thro' all her cycles—into man once more,
Or beast or bird or fish, or opulent flower :
But till this cosmic order everywhere
Shatter'd into one earthquake in one day
Cracks all to pieces,—and that hour
perhaps

Is not so far when momentary man
Shall seem no more a something to him-
self,

But he, his hopes and hates, his homes
and fanes,

And even his bones long laid within the
grave,

The verysides of the grave itself shall pass,
Vanishing, atom and void, atom and void,
Into the unseen for ever,—till that hour,
My golden work in which I told a truth
That stays the rolling Ixionian wheel,
And numbs the Fury's ringlet-snake, and
plucks

The mortal soul from out immortal hell,
Shall stand : ay, surely : then it fails at
last

And perishes as I must ; for O Thou,
 Passionless bride, divine Tranquillity,
 Yearn'd after by the wisest of the wise,
 Who fail to find thee, being as thou art
 Without one pleasure and without one
 pain,

Howbeit I know thou surely must be mine
 Or soon or late, yet out of season, thus
 I woo thee roughly, for thou carest not
 How roughly men may woo thee so they
 win—

Thus—thus : the soul flies out and dies
 in the air.'

With that he drove the knife into his
 side :
 She heard him raging, heard him fall ;
 ran in,
 Beat breast, tore hair, cried out upon
 herself
 As having fail'd in duty to him, shriek'd
 That she but meant to win him back, fell
 on him,
 Clasp'd, kiss'd him, wail'd : he answer'd,
 ' Care not thou !
 Thy duty ? What is duty ? Fare thee
 well !'

THE PRINCESS;

A MEDLEY

PROLOGUE

SIR Walter Vivian all a summer's day
 Gave his broad lawns until the set of sun
 Up to the people : thither flock'd at noon
 His tenants, wife and child, and thither
 half

The neighbouring borough with their
 Institute

Of which he was the patron. I was
 there

From college, visiting the son,—the son
 A Walter too,—with others of our set,
 Five others : we were seven at Vivian-
 place.

And me that morning Walter show'd
 the house,

Greek, set with busts : from vases in the
 hall

Flowers of all heavens, and lovelier than
 their names,

Grew side by side ; and on the pavement
 lay

Carved stones of the Abbey-ruin in the
 park,

Huge Ammonites, and the first bones of
 Time ;

And on the tables every clime and age

Jumbled together ; celts and calumets,
 Claymore and snowshoe, toys in lava,
 fans

Of sandal, amber, ancient rosaries,
 Laborious orient ivory sphere in sphere,
 The cursed Malayan crease, and battle-
 clubs

From the isles of palm : and higher on
 the walls,

Betwixt the monstrous horns of elk and
 deer,

His own forefathers' arms and armour
 hung.

And 'this' he said 'was Hugh's at
 Agincourt ;

And that was old Sir Ralph's at As-
 calon :

A good knight he ! we keep a chronicle
 With all about him '—which he brought,
 and I

Dived in a hoard of tales that dealt with
 knights,

Half-legend, half-historic, counts and
 kings

Who laid about them at their wills and
 died ;

And mixt with these, a lady, one that
 arm'd

Her own fair head, and sallying thro' the
gate,
Had beat her foes with slaughter from
her walls.

'O miracle of women,' said the book,
'O noble heart who, being strait-besieged
By this wild king to force her to his wish,
Nor bent, nor broke, nor shunn'd a
soldier's death,
But now when all was lost or seem'd as
lost—

Her stature more than mortal in the burst
Of sunrise, her arm lifted, eyes on fire—
Brake with a blast of trumpets from the
gate,

And, falling on them like a thunderbolt,
She trampled some beneath her horses'
heels,

And some were whelm'd with missiles of
the wall,

And some were push'd with lances from
the rock,

And part were drown'd within the whirl-
ing brook :

O miracle of noble womanhood !'

So sang the gallant glorious chronicle ;
And, I all rapt in this, 'Come out,' he
said,

'To the Abbey : there is Aunt Elizabeth
And sister Lilia with the rest.' We went
(I kept the book and had my finger in it)
Down thro' the park : strange was the
sight to me ;

For all the sloping pasture murmur'd,
sown

With happy faces and with holiday.

There moved the multitude, a thousand
heads :

The patient leaders of their Institute
Taught them with facts. One rear'd a
font of stone

And drew, from butts of water on the
slope,

The fountain of the moment, playing,
now

A twisted snake, and now a rain of pearls,
Or steep-up spout whereon the gilded
ball

Danced like a wisp : and somewhat lower
down

A man with knobs and wires and vials
fired

A cannon : Echo answer'd in her sleep
From hollow fields : and here were tele-
scopes

For azure views ; and there a group of
girls

In circle waited, whom the electric shock
Dislink'd with shrieks and laughter :
round the lake

A little clock-work steamer paddling plied
And shook the lilies : perch'd about the
knolls

A dozen angry models jetted steam :

A petty railway ran : a fire-balloon

Rose gem-like up before the dusky groves
And dropt a fairy parachute and past :

And there thro' twenty posts of telegraph
They flash'd a saucy message to and fro
Between the mimic stations ; so that sport
Went hand in hand with Science ; other-
where

Pure sport : a herd of boys with clamour
bowl'd

And stump'd the wicket ; babies roll'd
about

Like tumbled fruit in grass ; and men
and maids

Arranged a country dance, and flew thro'
light

And shadow, while the twangling violin
Struck up with Soldier-laddie, and over-
head

The broad ambrosial aisles of lofty lime
Made noise with bees and breeze from
end to end.

Strange was the sight and smacking of
the time ;

And long we gazed, but satiated at length
Came to the ruins. High-arch'd and ivy-
claspt,

Of finest Gothic lighter than a fire,
Thro' one wide chasm of time and frost
they gave

The park, the crowd, the house ; but all
within

The sward was trim as any garden lawn :

And here we lit on Aunt Elizabeth,
And Lilia with the rest, and lady friends
From neighbour seats : and there was
Ralph himself,

A broken statue propt against the wall,
As gay as any. Lilia, wild with sport,
Half child half woman as she was, had
wound

A scarf of orange round the stony helm,
And robed the shoulders in a rosy silk,
That made the old warrior from his ivied
nook

Glow like a sunbeam : near his tomb a
feast

Shone, silver-set ; about it lay the guests,
And there we join'd them : then the
maiden Aunt

Took this fair day for text, and from it
preach'd

An universal culture for the crowd,
And all things great ; but we, unworthier,
told

Of college : he had climb'd across the
spikes,

And he had squeezed himself betwixt the
bars,

And he had breathed the Proctor's dogs ;
and one

Discuss'd his tutor, rough to common
men,

But honeying at the whisper of a lord ;
And one the Master, as a rogue in grain
Veneer'd with sanctimonious theory.

But while they talk'd, above their heads
I saw

The feudal warrior lady-clad ; which
brought

My book to mind : and opening this I
read

Of old Sir Ralph a page or two that rang
With tilt and tourney ; then the tale of
her

That drove her foes with slaughter from
her walls,

And much I praised her nobleness, and
'Where,'

Ask'd Walter, patting Lilia's head (she lay
Beside him) 'lives there such a woman
now ?'

Quick answer'd Lilia 'There are thou-
sands now

Such women, but convention beats them
down :

It is but bringing up ; no more than that :
You men have done it : how I hate you
all !

Ah, were I something great ! I wish I
were

Some mighty poetess, I would shame you
then,

That love to keep us children ! O I wish
That I were some great princess, I would
build

Far off from men a college like a man's,
And I would teach them all that men are
taught ;

We are twice as quick !' And here she
shook aside

The hand that play'd the patron with her
curls.

And one said smiling 'Pretty were the
sight

If our old halls could change their sex,
and flaunt

With prudes for proctors, dowagers for
deans,

And sweet girl-graduates in their golden
hair.

I think they should not wear our rusty
gowns,

But move as rich as Emperor-moths, or
Ralph

Who shines so in the corner ; yet I fear,
If there were many Lilias in the brood,

However deep you might embower the
nest,

Some boy would spy it.'

At this upon the sword

She tapt her tiny silken-sandal'd foot :
'That's your light way ; but I would
make it death

For any male thing but to peep at us.'

Petulant she spoke, and at herself she
laugh'd ;

A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,
And sweet as English air could make her,
she :

But Walter hail'd a score of names upon
 her,
 And 'petty Ogress,' and 'ungrateful
 Puss,'
 And swore he long'd at college, only
 long'd,
 All else was well, for she-society.
 They boated and they cricketed; they
 talk'd
 At wine, in clubs, of art, of politics;
 They lost their weeks; they vex't the
 souls of deans;
 They rode; they betted; made a hundred
 friends,
 And caught the blossom of the flying
 terms,
 But miss'd the mignonette of Vivian-place,
 The little hearth-flower Lilia. Thus he
 spoke,
 Part banter, part affection.
 'True,' she said,
 'We doubt not that. O yes, you miss'd
 us much.
 I'll stake my ruby ring upon it you
 did.'

She held it out; and as a parrot turns
 Up thro' gilt wires a crafty loving eye,
 And takes a lady's finger with all care,
 And bites it for true heart and not for
 harm,
 So he with Lilia's. Daintily she shriek'd
 And wrung it. 'Doubt my word again!'
 he said.

'Come, listen! here is proof that you
 were miss'd:

We seven stay'd at Christmas up to read;
 And there we took one tutor as to read:
 The hard-grain'd Muses of the cube and
 square

Were out of season: never man, I think,
 So moulder'd in a sinecure as he:
 For while our cloisters echo'd frosty feet,
 And our long walks were stript as bare
 as brooms,

We did but talk you over, pledge you all
 In wassail; often, like as many girls—
 Sick for the hollies and the yews of home—
 As many little trifling Liliass—play'd
 Charades and riddles as at Christmas here,

And *what's my thought* and *when* and
where and *how*,

And often told a tale from mouth to mouth
 As here at Christmas.'

She remember'd that:
 A pleasant game, she thought: she liked
 it more

Than magic music, forfeits, all the rest.
 But these—what kind of tales did men
 tell men,

She wonder'd, by themselves?

A half-disdain
 Perch'd on the pouted blossom of her lips:
 And Walter nodded at me; '*He* began,
 The rest would follow, each in turn; and so
 We forged a sevenfold story. Kind?
 what kind?

Chimeras, crotchets, Christmas solecisms,
 Seven-headed monsters only made to kill
 Time by the fire in winter.'

'Kill him now,
 The tyrant! kill him in the summer too,'
 Said Lilia; 'Why not now?' the maiden
 Aunt.

'Why not a summer's as a winter's tale?
 A tale for summer as befits the time,
 And something it should be to suit the
 place,

Heroic, for a hero lies beneath,
 Grave, solemn!'

Walter warp'd his mouth at this
 To something so mock-solemn, that I
 laugh'd

And Lilia woke with sudden-shrilling
 mirth

An echo like a ghostly woodpecker,
 Hid in the ruins; till the maiden Aunt
 (A little sense of wrong had touch'd her
 face

With colour) turn'd to me with 'As you
 will;

Heroic if you will, or what you will,
 Or be yourself your hero if you will.'

'Take Lilia, then, for heroine,' clam-
 our'd he,

'And make her some great Princess, six
 feet high,

Grand, epic, homicidal; and be you
 The Prince to win her!'

'Then follow me, the Prince,'
I answer'd, 'each be hero in his turn !
Seven and yet one, like shadows in a
dream.—

Heroic seems our Princess as required—
But something made to suit with Time
and place,

A Gothic ruin and a Grecian house,
A talk of college and of ladies' rights,
A feudal knight in silken masquerade,
And, yonder, shrieks and strange experi-
ments

For which the good Sir Ralph had burnt
them all—

This *were* a medley ! we should have him
back

Who told the "Winter's tale" to do it
for us.

No matter : we will say whatever comes.
And let the ladies sing us, if they will,
From time to time, some ballad or a song
To give us breathing-space.'

So I began,
And the rest follow'd : and the women
sang

Between the rougher voices of the men,
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind :
And here I give the story and the songs.

I

A prince I was, blue-eyed, and fair in
face,

Of temper amorous, as the first of May,
With lengths of yellow ringlet, like a girl,
For on my cradle shone the Northern
star.

There lived an ancient legend in our
house.

Some sorcerer, whom a far-off grandsire
burnt

Because he cast no shadow, had fore-
told,

Dying, that none of all our blood should
know

The shadow from the substance, and that
one

Should come to fight with shadows and
to fall.

For so, my mother said, the story ran.

And, truly, waking dreams were, more or
less,

An old and strange affection of the house.
Myself too had weird seizures, Heaven
knows what :

On a sudden in the midst of men and day,
And while I walk'd and talk'd as hereto-
fore,

I seem'd to move among a world of ghosts,
And feel myself the shadow of a dream.

Our great court-Galen poised his gilt-head
cane,

And paw'd his beard, and mutter'd
'catalepsy.'

My mother pitying made a thousand
prayers ;

My mother was as mild as any saint,
Half-canonized by all that look'd on her,

So gracious was her tact and tenderness :
But my good father thought a king a king ;

He cared not for the affection of the house ;
He held his sceptre like a pedant's wand

To lash offence, and with long arms and
hands

Reach'd out, and pick'd offenders from
the mass

For judgment.

Now it chanced that I had been,
While life was yet in bud and blade,
betroth'd

To one, a neighbouring Princess : she to me
Was proxy-wedded with a bootless calf
At eight years old ; and still from time
to time

Came murmurs of her beauty from the
South,

And of her brethren, youths of puissance ;
And still I wore her picture by my heart,

And one dark tress ; and all around them
both

Sweet thoughts would swarm as bees about
their queen.

But when the days drew nigh that I
should wed,

My father sent ambassadors with furs
And jewels, gifts, to fetch her : these

brought back

A present, a great labour of the loom ;
And therewithal an answer vague as wind :

Besides, they saw the king ; he took the
 gifts ;
 He said there was a compact ; that was
 true :
 But then she had a will ; was he to blame ?
 And maiden fancies ; loved to live alone
 Among her women ; certain, would not
 wed.

That morning in the presence room I
 stood
 With Cyril and with Florian, my two
 friends :
 The first, a gentleman of broken means
 (His father's fault) but given to starts and
 bursts
 Of revel ; and the last, my other heart,
 And almost my half-self, for still we moved
 Together, twinn'd as horse's ear and eye.

Now, while they spake, I saw my
 father's face
 Grow long and troubled like a rising moon,
 Inflamed with wrath : he started on his
 feet,
 Tore the king's letter, snow'd it down,
 and rent
 The wonder of the loom thro' warp and
 woof
 From skirt to skirt ; and at the last he
 sware
 That he would send a hundred thousand
 men,
 And bring her in a whirlwind : then he
 chew'd
 The thrice-turn'd cud of wrath, and cook'd
 his spleen,
 Communing with his captains of the war.

At last I spoke. ' My father, let me go.
 It cannot be but some gross error lies
 In this report, this answer of a king,
 Whom all men rate as kind and hospitable :
 Or, maybe, I myself, my bride once
 seen,
 Whate'er my grief to find her less than
 fame,
 May rue the bargain made.' And Florian
 said :
 ' I have a sister at the foreign court,

Who moves about the Princess ; she, you
 know,
 Who wedded with a nobleman from thence :
 He, dying lately, left her, as I hear,
 The lady of three castles in that land :
 Thro' her this matter might besifted clean.'
 And Cyril whisper'd : ' Take me with you
 too.'

Then laughing ' what, if these weird
 seizures come
 Upon you in those lands, and no one near
 To point you out the shadow from the
 truth !
 Take me : I'll serve you better in a strait ;
 I grate on rusty hinges here : ' but ' No !'
 Roar'd the rough king, ' you shall not ;
 we ourself
 Will crush her pretty maiden fancies dead
 In iron gauntlets : break the council up.'

But when the council broke, I rose and
 past
 Thro' the wild woods that hung about the
 town ;
 Found a still place, and pluck'd her like-
 ness out ;
 Laid it on flowers, and watch'd it lying
 bathed
 In the green gleam of dewy-tassell'd trees :
 What were those fancies ? wherefore break
 her troth ?
 Proud look'd the lips : but while I medi-
 tated
 A wind arose and rush'd upon the South,
 And shook the songs, the whispers, and
 the shrieks
 Of the wild woods together ; and a Voice
 Went with it, ' Follow, follow, thou shalt
 win.'

Then, ere the silver sickle of that month
 Became her golden shield, I stole from
 court
 With Cyril and with Florian, unperceived,
 Cat-footed thro' the town and half in dread
 To hear my father's clamour at our backs
 With Ho ! from some bay-window shake
 the night ;
 But all was quiet : from the bastion'd
 walls

Like threaded spiders, one by one, we
dropt,
And flying reach'd the frontier : then we
crost
To a livelier land ; and so by tilth and
grange,
And vines, and blowing bosks of wilder-
ness,
We gain'd the mother-city thick with
towers,
And in the imperial palace found the king.

His name was Gama ; crack'd and
small his voice,
But bland the smile that like a wrinkling
wind
On glassy water drove his cheek in lines ;
A little dry old man, without a star,
Not like a king : three days he feasted us,
And on the fourth I spake of why we
came,
And my betroth'd. ' You do us, Prince,'
he said,
Airing a snowy hand and signet gem,
' All honour. We remember love our-
selves
In our sweet youth : there did a compact
pass
Long summers back, a kind of ceremony—
I think the year in which our olives
fail'd.
I would you had her, Prince, with all my
heart,
With my full heart : but there were
widows here,
Two widows, Lady Psyche, Lady Blanche ;
They fed her theories, in and out of place
Maintaining that with equal husbandry
The woman were an equal to the man.
They harp'd on this ; with this our ban-
quets rang ;
Our dances broke and buzz'd in knots of
talk ;
Nothing but this ; my very ears were hot
To hear them : knowledge, some daughter
held,
Was all in all : they had but been, she
thought,
As children ; they must lose the child,
assume

The woman : then, Sir, awful odes she
wrote,
Too awful, sure, for what they treated of,
But all she is and does is awful ; odes
About this losing of the child ; and rhymes
And dismal lyrics, prophesying change
Beyond all reason : these the women sang ;
And they that know such things—I sought
but peace ;
No critic I—would call them master-
pieces :
They master'd *me*. At last she begg'd a
boon,
A certain summer-palace which I have
Hard by your father's frontier : I said no,
Yet being an easy man, gave it : and
there,
All wild to found an University
For maidens, on the spur she fled ; and
more
We know not,—only this : they see no
men,
Not ev'n her brother Arac, nor the twins
Her brethren, tho' they love her, look
upon her
As on a kind of paragon ; and I
(Pardon me saying it) were much loth to
breed
Dispute betwixt myself and mine : but
since
(And I confess with right) you think me
bound
In some sort, I can give you letters to her ;
And yet, to speak the truth, I rate your
chance
Almost at naked nothing.'

Thus the king ;
And I, tho' nettled that he seem'd to slur
With garrulous ease and oily courtesies
Our formal compact, yet, not less (all frets
But chafing me on fire to find my bride)
Went forth again with both my friends.
We rode
Many a long league back to the North.
At last
From hills, that look'd across a land of
hope,
We dropt with evening on a rustic town
Set in a gleaming river's crescent-curve,
Close at the boundary of the liberties ;

There, enter'd an old hostel, call'd mine
 host
 To council, plied him with his richest
 wines,
 And show'd the late-writ letters of the
 king.

He with a long low sibilation, stared
 As blank as death in marble; then ex-
 claim'd
 Averring it was clear against all rules
 For any man to go: but as his brain
 Began to mellow, 'If the king,' he said,
 'Had given us letters, was he bound to
 speak?
 The king would bear him out;' and at
 the last—
 The summer of the vine in all his veins—
 'No doubt that we might make it worth
 his while.
 She once had past that way; he heard
 her speak;
 She scared him; life! he never saw the
 like;
 She look'd as grand as doomsday and as
 grave:
 And he, he revered his liege-lady there;
 He always made a point to post with
 mares;
 His daughter and his housemaid were the
 boys:
 The land, he understood, for miles about
 Was till'd by women; all the swine were
 sows,
 And all the dogs'—
 But while he jested thus,
 A thought flash'd thro' me which I clothed
 in act,
 Remembering how we three presented
 Maid
 Or Nymph, or Goddess, at high tide of
 feast,
 In masque or pageant at my father's court.
 We sent mine host to purchase female
 gear;
 He brought it, and himself, a sight to
 shake
 The midriff of despair with laughter, help
 To lace us up, till, each, in maiden
 plumes

We rustled: him we gave a costly bribe
 To guerdon silence, mounted our good
 steeds,
 And boldly ventured on the liberties.

We follow'd up the river as we rode,
 And rode till midnight when the college
 lights
 Began to glitter firefly-like in copse
 And linden alley: then we past an arch,
 Whereon a woman-statue rose with
 wings
 From four wing'd horses dark against the
 stars;
 And some inscription ran along the front,
 But deep in shadow further on we gain'd
 A little street half garden and half house;
 But scarce could hear each other speak
 for noise
 Of clocks and chimes, like silver hammers
 falling
 On silver anvils, and the splash and stir
 Of fountains spouted up and showering
 down
 In meshes of the jasmine and the rose:
 And all about us peal'd the nightingale,
 Rapt in her song, and careless of the
 snare.

There stood a bust of Pallas for a sign,
 By two sphere lamps blazon'd like Heaven
 and Earth
 With constellation and with continent,
 Above an entry: riding in, we call'd;
 A plump-arm'd Ostleress and a stable
 wench
 Came running at the call, and help'd us
 down.
 Then stept a buxom hostess forth, and
 sail'd,
 Full-blown, before us into rooms which
 gave
 Upon a pillar'd porch, the bases lost
 In laurel: her we ask'd of that and this,
 And who were tutors. 'Lady Blanche'
 she said,
 'And Lady Psyche.' 'Which was
 prettiest,
 Best-natured?' 'Lady Psyche.' 'Hers
 are we,'

One voice, we cried ; and I sat down and wrote,

In such a hand as when a field of corn
Bows all its ears before the roaring East ;

‘Three ladies of the Northern empire pray

Your Highness would enroll them with
your own,

As Lady Psyche’s pupils.’

This I seal’d :

The seal was Cupid bent above a scroll,
And o’er his head Uranian Venus hung,
And raised the blinding bandage from his eyes :

I gave the letter to be sent with dawn ;
And then to bed, where half in doze I seem’d

To float about a glimmering night, and watch

A full sea glazed with muffled moonlight,
swell

On some dark shore just seen that it was rich.

II

As thro’ the land at eve we went,

And pluck’d the ripen’d ears,

We fell out, my wife and I,

O we fell out I know not why,

And kiss’d again with tears.

And blessings on the falling out

That all the more endears,

When we fall out with those we love

And kiss again with tears !

For when we came where lies the child

We lost in other years,

There above the little grave,

O there above the little grave,

We kiss’d again with tears.

At break of day the College Portress came :

She brought us Academic silks, in hue

The lilac, with a silken hood to each,

And zoned with gold ; and now when these were on,

And we as rich as moths from dusk cocoons,

She, curtsying her obeisance, let us know

The Princess Ida waited : out we paced,

I first, and following thro’ the porch that sang

All round with laurel, issued in a court
Compact of lucid marbles, boss’d with lengths

Of classic frieze, with ample awnings gay
Betwixt the pillars, and with great urns of flowers.

The Muses and the Graces, group’d in threes,

Enring’d a billowing fountain in the midst ;

And here and there on lattice edges lay

Or book or lute ; but hastily we past,

And up a flight of stairs into the hall.

There at a board by tome and paper sat,

With two tame leopards couch’d beside her throne,

All beauty compass’d in a female form,

The Princess ; liker to the inhabitant

Of some clear planet close upon the Sun

Than our man’s earth ; such eyes were in her head,

And so much grace and power, breathing down

From over her arch’d brows, with every turn

Lived thro’ her to the tips of her long hands,

And to her feet. She rose her height, and said :

‘We give you welcome : not without redound

Of use and glory to yourselves ye come,

The first-fruits of the stranger : aftertime,

And that full voice which circles round the grave,

Will rank you nobly, mingled up with me.

What ! are the ladies of your land so tall ?’

‘We of the court’ said Cyril. ‘From the court’

She answer’d, ‘then ye know the Prince ?’ and he :

‘The climax of his age ! as tho’ there were One rose in all the world, your Highness that,

He worships your ideal :’ she replied :

'We scarcely thought in our own hall to hear

This barren verbiage, current among men,
Light coin, the tinsel clink of compliment.
Your flight from out your bookless wilds
would seem

As arguing love of knowledge and of power ;

Your language proves you still the child.
Indeed,

We dream not of him : when we set our hand

To this great work, we purposed with
ourselves

Never to wed. You likewise will do well,
Ladies, in entering here, to cast and fling
The tricks, which make us toys of men,
that so,

Some future time, if so indeed you will,
You may with those self-styled our lords
ally

Your fortunes, justlier balanced, scale with
scale.'

At those high words, we conscious of
ourselves,

Perused the matting ; then an officer
Rose up, and read the statutes, such as
these :

Not for three years to correspond with
home ;

Not for three years to cross the liberties ;
Not for three years to speak with any
men ;

And many more, which hastily subscribed,
We enter'd on the boards : and ' Now,'
she cried,

'Ye are green wood, see ye warp not.
Look, our hall !

Our statues !—not of those that men
desire,

Sleek Odaliskes, or oracles of mode,
Nor stunted squaws of West or East ; but
she

That taught the Sabine how to rule, and
she

The foundress of the Babylonian wall,
The Carian Artemisia strong in war,
The Rhodope, that built the pyramid,
Clelia, Cornelia, with the Palmyrene

That fought Aurelian, and the Roman
brows

Of Agrippina. Dwell with these, and
lose

Convention, since to look on noble forms
Makes noble thro' the sensuous organism
That which is higher. O lift your natures
up :

Embrace our aims : work out your free-
dom. Girls,

Knowledge is now no more a fountain
seal'd :

Drink deep, until the habits of the slave,
The sins of emptiness, gossip and spite
And slander, die. Better not be at all
Than not be noble. Leave us : you may
go :

To-day the Lady Psyche will harangue
The fresh arrivals of the week before ;
For they press in from all the provinces,
And fill the hive.'

She spoke, and bowing waved
Dismissal : back again we crost the court
To Lady Psyche's : as we enter'd in,
There sat along the forms, like morning
doves

That sun their milky bosoms on the
thatch,

A patient range of pupils : she herself
Erect behind a desk of satin-wood,
A quick brunette, well-moulded, falcon-
eyed,

And on the hither side, or so she look'd,
Of twenty summers. At her left, a child,
In shining draperies, headed like a star,
Her maiden babe, a double April old,
Aglaiâ slept. We sat: the Lady glanced:
Then Florian, but no livelier than the
dame

That whisper'd ' Asses' ears,' among the
sedge,

' My sister.' ' Comely, too, by all that's
fair,'

Said Cyril. ' O hush, hush !' and she
began.

' This world was once a fluid haze of
light,

Till toward the centre set the starry tides,
And eddied into suns, that wheeling cast

The planets : then the monster, then the
man ;

Tattoo'd or woaded, winter-clad in skins,
Raw from the prime, and crushing down
his mate ;

As yet we find in barbarous isles, and
here

Among the lowest.'

Thereupon she took

A bird's-eye-view of all the ungracious
past ;

Glanced at the legendary Amazon

As emblematic of a nobler age ;

Appraised the Lycian custom, spoke of
those

That lay at wine with Lar and Lucumo ;
Ran down the Persian, Grecian, Roman
lines

Of empire, and the woman's state in each,
How far from just ; till warming with her
theme

She fulminated out her scorn of laws Salique
And little-footed China, touch'd on
Mahomet

With much contempt, and came to
chivalry :

When some respect, however slight, was
paid

To woman, superstition all awry :

However then commenced the dawn : a
beam

Had slanted forward, falling in a land
Of promise ; fruit would follow. Deep,
indeed,

Their debt of thanks to her who first had
dared

To leap the rotten pales of prejudice,
Disyoke their necks from custom, and
assert

None lordlier than themselves but that
which made

Woman and man. She had founded ;
they must build.

Here might they learn whatever men were
taught :

Let them not fear : some said their heads
were less :

Some men's were small ; not they the
least of men ;

For often fineness compensated size :

Besides the brain was like the hand, and
grew

With using ; thence the man's, if more
was more ;

He took advantage of his strength to be
First in the field ; some ages had been lost ;
But woman ripen'd earlier, and her life
Was longer ; and albeit their glorious
names

Were fewer, scatter'd stars, yet since in
truth

The highest is the measure of the man,
And not the Kaffir, Hottentot, Malay,
Nor those horn-handed breakers of the
glebe,

But Homer, Plato, Verulam ; even so
With woman : and in arts of government
Elizabeth and others ; arts of war

The peasant Joan and others ; arts of grace
Sappho and others vied with any man :

And, last not least, she who had left her
place,

And bow'd her state to them, that they
might grow

To use and power on this Oasis, lapt
In the arms of leisure, sacred from the
blight

Of ancient influence and scorn.

At last

She rose upon a wind of prophecy
Dilating on the future ; ' everywhere
Two heads in council, two beside the
hearth,

Two in the tangled business of the world,
Two in the liberal offices of life,
Two plummets dropt for one to sound
the abyss

Of science, and the secrets of the mind :
Musician, painter, sculptor, critic, more :
And everywhere the broad and bounteous
Earth

Should bear a double growth of those
rare souls,

Poets, whose thoughts enrich the blood
of the world.'

She ended here, and beckon'd us : the
rest

Parted ; and, glowing full-faced welcome,
she

Began to address us, and was moving on
In gratulation, till as when a boat
Tacks, and the slacken'd sail flaps, all
her voice
Faltering and fluttering in her throat, she
cried
'My brother !' 'Well, my sister.' 'O,'
she said,
'What do you here ? and in this dress ?
and these ?
Why who are these ? a wolf within the
fold !
A pack of wolves ! the Lord be gracious
to me !
A plot, a plot, a plot, to ruin all !'
'No plot, no plot,' he answer'd.
'Wretched boy,
How saw you not the inscription on the
gate,
LET NO MAN ENTER IN ON PAIN OF
DEATH ?'
'And if I had,' he answer'd, 'who could
think
The softer Adams of your Academe,
O sister, Sirens tho' they be, were such
As chanted on the blanching bones of
men ?'
'But you will find it otherwise' she said.
'You jest : ill jesting with edge-tools !
my vow
Binds me to speak, and O that iron will,
That axelike edge unturnable, our Head,
The Princess.' 'Well then, Psyche, take
my life,
And nail me like a weasel on a grange
For warning : bury me beside the gate,
And cut this epitaph above my bones ;
*Here lies a brother by a sister slain,
All for the common good of womankind.'*
'Let me die too,' said Cyril, 'having
seen
And heard the Lady Psyche.'
I struck in :
'Albeit so mask'd, Madam, I love the
truth ;
Receive it ; and in me behold the Prince
Your countryman, affianced years ago
To the Lady Ida : here, for here she was,
And thus (what other way was left) I
came.'

'O Sir, O Prince, I have no country ;
 none ;
 If any, this ; but none. Whate'er I was
 Disrooted, what I am is grafted here.
 affianced, Sir ? love-whispers may not
 breathe
 Within this vestal limit, and how should
 I,
 Who am not mine, say, live : the thunder-
 bolt
 Hangs silent ; but prepare : I speak ; it
 falls.'

'Yet pause,' I said : 'for that inscription
 there,
 I think no more of deadly lurks therein,
 Than in a clapper clapping in a garth,
 To scare the fowl from fruit : if more
 there be,
 If more and acted on, what follows ? war ;
 Your own work marr'd : for this your
 Academe,
 Whichever side be Victor, in the halloo
 Will topple to the trumpet down, and
 pass
 With all fair theories only made to gild
 A stormless summer.' 'Let the Princess
 judge
 Of that' she said : 'farewell, Sir—and
 to you.
 I shudder at the sequel, but I go.'

'Are you that Lady Psyche,' I re-
 join'd,
 'The fifth in line from that old Florian,
 Yet hangs his portrait in my father's hall
 (The gaunt old Baron with his beetle brow
 Sun-shaded in the heat of dusty fights)
 As he bestrode my Grandsire, when he
 fell,
 And all else fled ? we point to it, and
 we say,
 The loyal warmth of Florian is not cold,
 But branches current yet in kindred
 veins.'

'Are you that Psyche,' Florian added ;
 'she
 With whom I sang about the morning
 hills,
 Flung ball, flew kite, and raced the
 purple fly,

And snared the squirrel of the glen? are
you
That Psyche, wont to bind my throbbing
brow,
To smooth my pillow, mix the foaming
draught
Of fever, tell me pleasant tales, and read
My sickness down to happy dreams? are
you

That brother-sister Psyche, both in one?
You were that Psyche, but what are you
now?'

'You are that Psyche,' Cyril said, 'for
whom

I would be that for ever which I seem,
Woman, if I might sit beside your feet,
And glean your scatter'd sapience.'

Then once more,

'Are you that Lady Psyche,' I began,
'That on her bridal morn before she past
From all her old companions, when the
king

Kiss'd her pale cheek, declared that
ancient ties

Would still be dear beyond the southern
hills;

That were there any of our people there
In want or peril, there was one to hear
And help them? look! for such are these
and I.'

'Are you that Psyche,' Florian ask'd,
'to whom,

In gentler days, your arrow-wounded fawn
Came flying while you sat beside the well?
The creature laid his muzzle on your lap,
And sobb'd, and you sobb'd with it, and
the blood

Was sprinkled on your kirtle, and you
wept.

That was fawn's blood, not brother's, yet
you wept.

O by the bright head of my little niece,
You were that Psyche, and what are
you now?'

'You are that Psyche,' Cyril said again,
'The mother of the sweetest little maid,
That ever crow'd for kisses.'

'Out upon it!'

She answer'd, 'peace! and why should
I not play

The Spartan Mother with emotion, be
The Lucius Junius Brutus of my kind?
Him you call great: he for the common
weal,

The fading politics of mortal Rome,
As I might slay this child, if good need
were,

Slew both his sons: and I, shall I, on
whom

The secular emancipation turns
Of half this world, be swerved from right
to save

A prince, a brother? a little will I yield.
Best so, perchance, for us, and well for
you.

O hard, when love and duty clash! I fear
My conscience will not count me fleck-
less; yet—

Hear my conditions: promise (otherwise
You perish) as you came, to slip away
To-day, to-morrow, soon: it shall be
said,

These women were too barbarous, would
not learn;

They fled, who might have shamed us:
promise, all.'

What could we else, we promised each;
and she,

Like some wild creature newly-caged,
commenced

A to-and-fro, so pacing till she paused
By Florian; holding out her lily arms
Took both his hands, and smiling faintly
said:

'I knew you at the first: tho' you have
grown

You scarce have alter'd: I am sad and
glad

To see you, Florian. I give thee to death
My brother! it was duty spoke, not I.
My needful seeming harshness, pardon it.
Our mother, is she well?'

With that she kiss'd
His forehead, then, a moment after, clung
About him, and betwixt them blossom'd
up

From out a common vein of memory
Sweet household talk, and phrases of the
hearth,

And far allusion, till the gracious dew
 Began to glisten and to fall : and while
 They stood, so rapt, we gazing, came a
 voice,

‘I brought a message here from Lady
 Blanche.’

Back started she, and turning round we
 saw

The Lady Blanche’s daughter where she
 stood,

Melissa, with her hand upon the lock,
 A rosy blonde, and in a college gown,
 That clad her like an April daffodilly
 (Her mother’s colour) with her lips apart,
 And all her thoughts as fair within her
 eyes,

As bottom agates seen to wave and float
 In crystal currents of clear morning seas.

So stood that same fair creature at the
 door.

Then Lady Psyche, ‘Ah—Melissa—you !
 You heard us?’ and Melissa, ‘O pardon
 me

I heard, I could not help it, did not
 wish :

But, dearest Lady, pray you fear me not,
 Nor think I bear that heart within my
 breast,

To give three gallant gentlemen to death.’
 ‘I trust you,’ said the other, ‘for we two
 Were always friends, none closer, elm
 and vine :

But yet your mother’s jealous tempera-
 ment—

Let not your prudence, dearest, drowse,
 or prove

The Danaïd of a leaky vase, for fear
 This whole foundation ruin, and I lose
 My honour, these their lives.’ ‘Ah, fear
 me not’

Replied Melissa ; ‘no—I would not tell,
 No, not for all Aspasia’s cleverness,
 No, not to answer, Madam, all those
 hard things

That Sheba came to ask of Solomon.’
 ‘Be it so’ the other, ‘that we still may
 lead

The new light up, and culminate in peace,
 For Solomon may come to Sheba yet.’

Said Cyril, ‘Madam, he the wisest man
 Feasted the woman wisest then, in halls
 Of Lebanonian cedar : nor should you
 (Tho’, Madam, *you* should answer, *we*
 would ask)

Less welcome find among us, if you came
 Among us, debtors for our lives to you,
 Myself for something more.’ He said
 not what,

But ‘Thanks,’ she answer’d ‘Go: we have
 been too long

Together: keep your hoods about the
 face ;

They do so that affect abstraction here.
 Speak little ; mix not with the rest ; and
 hold

Your promise : all, I trust, may yet be
 well.’

We turn’d to go, but Cyril took the
 child,

And held her round the knees against his
 waist,

And blew the swoll’n cheek of a trumpeter,
 While Psyche watch’d them, smiling, and
 the child

Push’d her flat hand against his face and
 laugh’d ;

And thus our conference closed.

And then we stroll’d
 For half the day thro’ stately theatres
 Bench’d crescent-wise. In each we sat,
 we heard

The grave Professor. On the lecture
 slate

The circle rounded under female hands
 With flawless demonstration: follow’d
 then

A classic lecture, rich in sentiment,
 With scraps of thundrous Epic lilted out
 By violet-hooded Doctors, elegies
 And quoted odes, and jewels five-words
 long

That on the stretch’d forefinger of all
 Time

Sparkle for ever: then we dipt in all
 That treats of whatsoever is, the state,
 The total chronicles of man, the mind,
 The morals, something of the frame, the
 rock,

The star, the bird, the fish, the shell, the
 flower,
 Electric, chemic laws, and all the rest,
 And whatsoever can be taught and
 known ;
 Till like three horses that have broken
 fence,
 And glutted all night long breast-deep in
 corn,
 We issued gorged with knowledge, and
 I spoke :
 'Why, Sirs, they do all this as well as
 we.'
 'They hunt old trails' said Cyril 'very
 well ;
 But when did woman ever yet invent ?'
 'Ungracious !' answer'd Florian ; 'have
 you learnt
 No more from Psyche's lecture, you that
 talk'd
 The trash that made me sick, and almost
 sad ?'
 'O trash' he said, 'but with a kernel in
 it.
 Should I not call her wise, who made me
 wise ?
 And learnt ? I learnt more from her in a
 flash,
 Than if my brainpan were an empty hull,
 And every Muse tumbled a science in.
 A thousand hearts lie fallow in these halls,
 And round these halls a thousand baby
 loves
 Fly twanging headless arrows at the
 hearts,
 Whence follows many a vacant pang ;
 but O
 With me, Sir, enter'd in the bigger boy,
 The Head of all the golden-shafted firm,
 The long-limb'd lad that had a Psyche
 too ;
 He cleft me thro' the stomacher ; and
 now
 What think you of it, Florian ? do I chase
 The substance or the shadow ? will it
 hold ?
 I have no sorcerer's malison on me,
 No ghostly hauntings like his Highness. I
 Flatter myself that always everywhere
 I know the substance when I see it. Well,

Are castles shadows ? Three of them ?
 Is she
 The sweet proprietress a shadow ? If not,
 Shall those three castles patch my tatter'd
 coat ?
 For dear are those three castles to my
 wants,
 And dear is sister Psyche to my heart,
 And two dear things are one of double
 worth,
 And much I might have said, but that
 my zone
 Unmann'd me : then the Doctors ! O to
 hear
 The Doctors ! O to watch the thirsty
 plants
 Imbibing ! once or twice I thought to roar,
 To break my chain, to shake my mane :
 but thou,
 Modulate me, Soul of mincing mimicry !
 Make liquid treble of that bassoon, my
 throat ;
 Abase those eyes that ever loved to meet
 Star-sisters answering under crescent
 brows ;
 Abate the stride, which speaks of man,
 and loose
 A flying charm of blushes o'er this cheek,
 Where they like swallows coming out of
 time
 Will wonder why they came : but hark
 the bell
 For dinner, let us go !'
 And in we stream'd
 Among the columns, pacing staid and still
 By twos and threes, till all from end to
 end
 With beauties every shade of brown and
 fair
 In colours gayer than the morning mist,
 The long hall glitter'd like a bed of
 flowers.
 How might a man not wander from his
 wits
 Pierced thro' with eyes, but that I kept
 mine own
 Intent on her, who rapt in glorious dreams,
 The second-sight of some Astræan age,
 Sat compass'd with professors : they, the
 while,

Discuss'd a doubt and tost it to and fro :
A clamour thicken'd, mixt with inmost
terms

Of art and science : Lady Blanche alone
Of faded form and haughtiest lineaments,
With all her autumn tresses falsely brown,
Shot sidelong daggers at us, a tiger-cat
In act to spring.

At last a solemn grace
Concluded, and we sought the gardens :
there

One walk'd reciting by herself, and one
In this hand held a volume as to read,
And smoothed a petted peacock down
with that :

Some to a low song oar'd a shallop by,
Or under arches of the marble bridge
Hung, shadow'd from the heat : some
hid and sought

In the orange thickets : others tost a ball
Above the fountain-jets, and back again
With laughter : others lay about the
lawns,

Of the older sort, and murmur'd that their
May

Was passing : what was learning unto
them ?

They wish'd to marry ; they could rule a
house ;

Men hated learned women : but we three
Sat muffled like the Fates ; and often
came

Melissa hitting all we saw with shafts
Of gentle satire, kin to charity,
That harm'd not : then day droopt ; the
chapel bells

Call'd us : we left the walks ; we mixt
with those

Six hundred maidens clad in purest white,
Before two streams of light from wall to
wall,

While the great organ almost burst his
pipes,

Groaning for power, and rolling thro' the
court

A long melodious thunder to the sound
Of solemn psalms, and silver litanies,
The work of Ida, to call down from
Heaven

A blessing on her labours for the world.

III

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea !
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me ;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon ;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon ;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon :
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

Morn in the white wake of the morning
star

Came furrowing all the orient into gold.
We rose, and each by other drest with
care

Descended to the court that lay three parts
In shadow, but the Muses' heads were
touch'd

Above the darkness from their native East.

There while we stood beside the fount,
and watch'd

Or seem'd to watch the dancing bubble,
approach'd

Melissa, tinged with wan from lack of
sleep,

Or grief, and glowing round her dewy
eyes

The circled Iris of a night of tears ;
'And fly,' she cried, 'O fly, while yet
you may !

My mother knows : ' and when I ask'd
her 'how,'

'My fault' she wept 'my fault ! and yet
not mine ;

Yet mine in part. O hear me, pardon
me.

My mother, 'tis her wont from night to
night

To rail at Lady Psyche and her side.
She says the Princess should have been
the Head,

Herself and Lady Psyche the two arms ;

And so it was agreed when first they
came ;
But Lady Psyche was the right hand now,
And she the left, or not, or seldom used ;
Hers more than half the students, all the
love.
And so last night she fell to canvass you :
Her countrywomen ! she did not envy
her.
“ Who ever saw such wild barbarians ?
Girls ?—more like men ! ” and at these
words the snake,
My secret, seem’d to stir within my breast ;
And oh, Sirs, could I help it, but my
cheek
Began to burn and burn, and her lynx
eye
To fix and make me hotter, till she
laugh’d :
“ O marvellously modest maiden, you !
Men ! girls, like men ! why, if they had
been men
You need not set your thoughts in rubric
thus
For wholesale comment.” Pardon, I am
shamed
That I must needs repeat for my excuse
What looks so little graceful : “ men ”
(for still
My mother went revolving on the word)
“ And so they are, —very like men in-
deed—
And with that woman closeted for hours ! ”
Then came these dreadful words out one
by one,
“ Why—these—*are*—men : ” I shudder’d :
“ and you know it.”
“ O ask me nothing,” I said : “ And she
knows too,
And she conceals it.” So my mother
clutch’d
The truth at once, but with no word from
me ;
And now thus early risen she goes to
inform
The Princess : Lady Psyche will be
crush’d ;
But you may yet be saved, and therefore
fly :
But heal me with your pardon ere you go.’

‘ What pardon, sweet Melissa, for a
blush ? ’
Said Cyril : ‘ Pale one, blush again : than
wear
Those lilies, better blush our lives away.
Yet let us breathe for one hour more in
Heaven ’
He added, ‘ lest some classic Angel speak
In scorn of us, “ They mounted, Gany-
medes,
To tumble, Vulcans, on the second morn.”
But I will melt this marble into wax
To yield us farther furlough : ’ and he went.

 Melissa shook her doubtful curls, and
 thought
He scarce would prosper. ‘ Tell us,’
 Florian ask’d,
‘ How grew this feud betwixt the right
 and left.’
‘ O long ago,’ she said, ‘ betwixt these
 two
Division smoulders hidden ; ’tis my
 mother,
Too jealous, often fretful as the wind
Pent in a crevice : much I bear with her :
I never knew my father, but she says
(God help her) she was wedded to a fool ;
And still she rail’d against the state of
 things.
She had the care of Lady Ida’s youth,
And from the Queen’s decease she brought
 her up.
But when your sister came she won the
 heart
Of Ida : they were still together, grew
(For so they said themselves) inosculated ;
Consonant chords that shiver to one note ;
One mind in all things : yet my mother
 still
Affirms your Psyche thieved her theories,
And angled with them for her pupil’s love :
She calls her plagiarist ; I know not what :
But I must go : I dare not tarry,’ and
 light,
As flies the shadow of a bird, she fled.

 Then murmur’d Florian gazing after
 her,
‘ An open-hearted maiden, true and pure.

If I could love, why this were she : how
pretty
Her blushing was, and how she blush'd
again,
As if to close with Cyril's random wish :
Not like your Princess cramm'd with
erring pride,
Nor like poor Psyche whom she drags in
tow.'

'The crane,' I said, 'may chatter of
the crane,
The dove may murmur of the dove, but I
An eagle clang an eagle to the sphere.
My princess, O my princess ! true she errs,
But in her own grand way : being herself
Three times more noble than three score
of men,
She sees herself in every woman else,
And so she wears her error like a crown
To blind the truth and me : for her, and
her,
Hebes are they to hand ambrosia, mix
The nectar ; but—ah she—whene'er she
moves
The Samian Herè rises and she speaks
A Memnon smitten with the morning
Sun.'

So saying from the court we paced,
and gain'd
The terrace ranged along the Northern
front,
And leaning there on those balusters, high
Above the empurpled champaign, drank
the gale
That blown about the foliage underneath,
And sated with the innumerable rose,
Beat balm upon our eyelids. Hither came
Cyril, and yawning 'O hard task,' he
cried ;
'No fighting shadows here ! I forced a
way
Thro' solid opposition crabb'd and gnarl'd.
Better to clear prime forests, heave and
thump
A league of street in summer solstice
down,
Than hammer at this reverend gentle-
woman.

I knock'd and, bidden, enter'd ; found
her there
At point to move, and settled in her eyes
The green malignant light of coming
storm.
Sir, I was courteous, every phrase well-
oil'd,
As man's could be ; yet maiden-meek I
pray'd
Concealment : she demanded who we
were,
And why we came ? I fabled nothing fair,
But, your example pilot, told her all.
Up went the hush'd amaze of hand and
eye.
But when I dwelt upon your old affiance,
She answer'd sharply that I talk'd astray.
I urged the fierce inscription on the gate,
And our three lives. True—we had
limed ourselves
With open eyes, and we must take the
chance.
But such extremes, I told her, well might
harm
The woman's cause. "Not more than
now," she said,
"So puddled as it is with favouritism."
I tried the mother's heart. Shame might
befall
Melissa, knowing, saying not she knew :
Her answer was "Leave me to deal with
that."
I spoke of war to come and many deaths,
And she replied, her duty was to speak,
And duty duty, clear of consequences.
I grew discouraged, Sir ; but since I knew
No rock so hard but that a little wave
May beat admission in a thousand years,
I recommenced ; "Decide not ere you
pause.
I find you here but in the second place,
Some say the third—the authentic found-
ress you.
I offer boldly : we will seat you highest :
Wink at our advent : help my prince to
gain
His rightful bride, and here I promise
you
Some palace in our land, where you shall
reign

The head and heart of all our fair she-
world,
And your great name flow on with broad-
ening time
For ever." Well, she balanced this a
little,
And told me she would answer us to-day,
Meantime be mute : thus much, nor more
I gain'd.'

He ceasing, came a message from the
Head.
'That afternoon the Princess rode to take
The dip of certain strata to the North.
Would we go with her? we should find
the land
Worth seeing ; and the river made a fall
Out yonder : ' then she pointed on to
where
A double hill ran up his furrowy forks
Beyond the thick-leaved platans of the
vale.

Agreed to, this, the day fled on thro'
all
Its range of duties to the appointed hour.
Then summon'd to the porch we went.
She stood
Among her maidens, higher by the head,
Her back against a pillar, her foot on
one
Of those tame leopards. Kittenlike he
roll'd
And paw'd about her sandal. I drew
near ;
I gazed. On a sudden my strange seizure
came
Upon me, the weird vision of our house :
The Princess Ida seem'd a hollow show,
Her gay-furr'd cats a painted fantasy,
Her college and her maidens, empty
masks,
And I myself the shadow of a dream,
For all things were and were not. Yet
I felt
My heart beat thick with passion and
with awe ;
Then from my breast the involuntary sigh
Brake, as she smote me with the light of
eyes

That lent my knee desire to kneel, and
shook
My pulses, till to horse we got, and so
Went forth in long retinue following up
The river as it narrow'd to the hills.

I rode beside her and to me she said :
'O friend, we trust that you esteem'd us
not
Too harsh to your companion yestermorn ;
Unwillingly we spake.' 'No—not to her,'
I answer'd, 'but to one of whom we spake
Your Highness might have seem'd the
thing you say.'
'Again?' she cried, 'are you ambassa-
dresses
From him to me? we give you, being
strange,
A license : speak, and let the topic die.'

I stammer'd that I knew him—could
have wish'd—
'Our king expects—was there no pre-
contract?
There is no truer-hearted—ah, you seem
All he prefigured, and he could not see
The bird of passage flying south but
long'd
To follow : surely, if your Highness keep
Your purport, you will shock him ev'n to
death,
Or baser courses, children of despair.'

'Poor boy,' she said, 'can he not read
—no books?
Quoit, tennis, ball—no games? nor deals
in that
Which men delight in, martial exercise?
To nurse a blind ideal like a girl,
Methinks he seems no better than a girl ;
As girls were once, as we ourself have
been :
We had our dreams ; perhaps he mixt
with them :
We touch on our dead self, nor shun to
do it,
Being other—since we learnt our meaning
here,
To lift the woman's fall'n divinity
Upon an even pedestal with man.'

She paused, and added with a haughtier smile
 'And as to precontracts, we move, my friend,
 At no man's beck, but know ourself and thee,
 O Vashti, noble Vashti ! Summon'd out
 She kept her state, and left the drunken king
 To brawl at Shushan underneath the palms.'

'Alas your Highness breathes full East,' I said,
 'On that which leans to you. I know the Prince,
 I prize his truth: and then how vast a work
 To assail this gray preëminence of man !
 You grant me license; might I use it ? think ;
 Ere half be done perchance your life may fail ;
 Then comes the feeblèr heiress of your plan,
 And takes and ruins all ; and thus your pains
 May only make that footprint upon sand
 Which old-recurring waves of prejudice
 Resmooth to nothing: might I dread that you,
 With only Fame for spouse and your great deeds
 For issue, yet may live in vain, and miss,
 Meanwhile, what every woman counts her due,
 Love, children, happiness ?'

And she exclaim'd,
 'Peace, you young savage of the Northern wild !
 What ! tho' your Prince's love were like a God's,
 Have we not made ourself the sacrifice ?
 You are bold indeed: we are not talk'd to thus :
 Yet will we say for children, would they grew
 Like field-flowers everywhere ! we like them well :
 But children die ; and let me tell you, girl,

Howe'er you babble, great deeds cannot die ;
 They with the sun and moon renew their light
 For ever, blessing those that look on them.
 Children—that men may pluck them from our hearts,
 Kill us with pity, break us with ourselves—
 O—children—there is nothing upon earth
 More miserable than she that has a son
 And sees him err: nor would we work for fame ;
 Tho' she perhaps might reap the applause of Great,
 Who learns the one *POU STO* whence afterwards
 May move the world, tho' she herself effect
 But little: wherefore up and act, nor shrink
 For fear our solid aim be dissipated
 By frail successors. Would, indeed, we had been,
 In lieu of many mortal flies, a race
 Of giants living, each, a thousand years,
 That we might see our own work out, and watch
 The sandy footprint harden into stone.'

I answer'd nothing, doubtful in myself
 If that strange Poet-princess with her grand
 Imaginations might at all be won.
 And she broke out interpreting my thoughts :

'No doubt we seem a kind of monster to you ;
 We are used to that: for women, up till this
 Cramp'd under worse than South-sea-isle taboo,
 Dwarfs of the gynæceum, fail so far
 In high desire, they know not, cannot guess
 How much their welfare is a passion to us.
 If we could give them surer, quicker proof—
 Oh if our end were less achievable

By slow approaches, than by single act
Of immolation, any phase of death,
We were as prompt to spring against the
pikes,
Or down the fiery gulf as talk of it,
To compass our dear sisters' liberties.'

She bow'd as if to veil a noble tear ;
And up we came to where the river sloped
To plunge in cataract, shattering on black
blocks
A breadth of thunder. O'er it shook the
woods,
And danced the colour, and, below, stuck
out
The bones of some vast bulk that lived
and roar'd
Before man was. She gazed awhile and
said,
'As these rude bones to us, are we to
her
That will be.' 'Dare we dream of that,'
I ask'd,
'Which wrought us, as the workman and
his work,
That practice betters?' 'How,' she cried,
'you love
The metaphysics ! read and earn our prize,
A golden brooch : beneath an emerald
plane
Sits Diotima, teaching him that died
Of hemlock ; our device ; wrought to the
life ;
She rapt upon her subject, he on her :
For there are schools for all.' 'And yet '
I said
'Methinks I have not found among them
all
One anatomic.' 'Nay, we thought of
that,'
She answer'd, 'but it pleased us not : in
truth
We shudder but to dream our maids
should ape
Those monstrous males that carve the
living hound,
And cram him with the fragments of the
grave,
Or in the dark dissolving human heart,
And holy secrets of this microcosm,

Dabbling a shameless hand with shameful
jest,
Encarnalize their spirits : yet we know
Knowledge is knowledge, and this matter
hangs :
Howbeit ourself, foreseeing casualty,
Nor willing men should come among us,
learnt,
For many weary moons before we came,
This craft of healing. Were you sick,
ourself
Would tend upon you. To your question
now,
Which touches on the workman and his
work.
Let there be light and there was light :
'tis so :
For was, and is, and will be, are but is ;
And all creation is one act at once,
The birth of light : but we that are not all,
As parts, can see but parts, now this,
now that,
And live, perforce, from thought to
thought, and make
One act a phantom of succession : thus
Our weakness somehow shapes the
shadow, Time ;
But in the shadow will we work, and
mould
The woman to the fuller day.'

She spake

With kindled eyes : we rode a league
beyond,
And, o'er a bridge of pinewood crossing,
came
On flowery levels underneath the crag,
Full of all beauty. 'O how sweet' I said
(For I was half-oblivious of my mask)
'To linger here with one that loved us.'
'Yea,'
She answer'd, 'or with fair philosophies
That lift the fancy ; for indeed these fields
Are lovely, lovelier not the Elysian lawns,
Where paced the Demigods of old, and
saw
The soft white vapour streak the crowned
towers
Built to the Sun : ' then, turning to her
maids,
'Pitch our pavilion here upon the sward ;

Lay out the viands.' At the word, they
 raised
 A tent of satin, elaborately wrought
 With fair Corinna's triumph; here she
 stood,
 Engirt with many a florid maiden-cheek,
 The woman-conqueror; woman-conquer'd
 there
 The bearded Victor of ten-thousand
 hymns,
 And all the men mourn'd at his side: but
 we
 Set forth to climb; then, climbing, Cyril
 kept
 With Psyche, with Melissa Florian, I
 With mine affianced. Many a little hand
 Glanced like a touch of sunshine on the
 rocks,
 Many a light foot shone like a jewel set
 In the dark crag: and then we turn'd,
 we wound
 About the cliffs, the copses, out and in,
 Hammering and clinking, chattering stony
 names
 Of shale and hornblende, rag and trap
 and tuff,
 Amygdaloid and trachyte, till the Sun
 Grew broader toward his death and fell,
 and all
 The rosy heights came out above the
 lawns.

IV

The splendour falls on castle walls
 And snowy summits old in story:
 The long light shakes across the lakes,
 And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
 And thinner, clearer, farther going!
 O sweet and far from cliff and scar
 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
 Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
 Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river:
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow for ever and for ever.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

'There sinks the nebulous star we call
 the Sun,
 If that hypothesis of theirs be sound'
 Said Ida; 'let us down and rest;' and
 we
 Down from the lean and wrinkled precipices,
 By every coppice-feather'd chasm and
 cleft,
 Dropt thro' the ambrosial gloom to where
 below
 No bigger than a glow-worm shone the
 tent
 Lamp-lit from the inner. Once she lean'd
 on me,
 Descending; once or twice she lent her
 hand,
 And blissful palpitations in the blood,
 Stirring a sudden transport rose and fell.

But when we planted level feet, and
 dipt
 Beneath the satin dome and enter'd in,
 There leaning deep in broider'd down we
 sank
 Our elbows: on a tripod in the midst
 A fragrant flame rose, and before us glow'd
 Fruit, blossom, viand, amber wine, and
 gold.

Then she, 'Let some one sing to us:
 lightlier move
 The minutes fledged with music:' and a
 maid,
 Of those beside her, smote her harp, and
 sang.

'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
 Tears from the depth of some divine despair
 Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
 In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
 And thinking of the days that are no more.

'Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
 That brings our friends up from the underworld,
 Sad as the last which reddens over one
 That sinks with all we love below the verge;
 So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

'Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
 The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
 To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
 The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
 So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

'Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.'

She ended with such passion that the
tear,
She sang of, shook and fell, an erring
pearl
Lost in her bosom: but with some disdain
Answer'd the Princess, 'If indeed there
haunt
About the moulder'd lodges of the Past
So sweet a voice and vague, fatal to men,
Well needs it we should cram our ears
with wool
And so pace by: but thine are fancies
hatch'd
In silken-folded idleness; nor is it
Wiser to weep a true occasion lost,
But trim our sails, and let old bygones
be,
While down the streams that float us each
and all
To the issue, goes, like glittering bergs
of ice,
Throne after throne, and molten on the
waste
Becomes a cloud: for all things serve
their time
Toward that great year of equal might
and rights,
Nor would I fight with iron laws, in the
end
Found golden: let the past be past; let
be
Their cancell'd Babels: tho' the rough
kex break
The starr'd mosaic, and the beard-blown
goat
Hang on the shaft, and the wild figtree
split
Their monstrous idols, care not while we
hear
A trumpet in the distance pealing news
Of better, and Hope, a poisoning eagle,
burns
Above the unrisen morrow: 'then to me;
'Know you no song of your own land,' she
said,

'Not such as moans about the retrospect,
But deals with the other distance and the
hues
Of promise; not a death's-head at the
wine.'

Then I remember'd one myself had
made,
What time I watch'd the swallow wing-
ing south
From mine own land, part made long
since, and part
Now while I sang, and maidenlike as far
As I could ape their treble, did I sing.

'O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

'O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

'O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and
light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

'O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

'Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself, when all the woods are green?

'O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown:
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is made.

'O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

'O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her
mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.'

I ceased, and all the ladies, each at each,
Like the Ithacensian suitors in old time,
Stared with great eyes, and laugh'd with
alien lips,
And knew not what they meant; for still
my voice
Rang false: but smiling 'Not for thee,'
she said,

'O Bulbul, any rose of Gulistan
 Shall burst her veil : marsh-divers, rather,
 maid,
 Shall croak thee sister, or the meadow-
 crake
 Grate her harsh kindred in the grass : and
 this
 A mere love-poem ! O for such, my friend,
 We hold them slight : they mind us of
 the time
 When we made bricks in Egypt. Knaves
 are men,
 That lute and flute fantastic tenderness,
 And dress the victim to the offering up.
 And paint the gates of Hell with Paradise,
 And play the slave to gain the tyranny.
 Poor soul ! I had a maid of honour once ;
 She wept her true eyes blind for such a
 one,
 A rogue of canzonets and serenades.
 I loved her. Peace be with her. She
 is dead.
 So they blaspheme the muse ! But great
 is song
 Used to great ends : ourself have often
 tried
 Valkyrian hymns, or into rhythm have
 dash'd
 The passion of the prophetess ; for song
 Is duer unto freedom, force and growth
 Of spirit than to junketing and love.
 Love is it ? Would this same mock-love,
 and this
 Mock-Hymen were laid up like winter
 bats,
 Till all men grew to rate us at our worth,
 Not vassals to be beat, nor pretty babes
 To be dandled, no, but living wills, and
 sphered
 Whole in ourselves and owed to none.
 Enough !
 But now to leaven play with profit, you,
 Know you no song, the true growth of
 your soil,
 That gives the manners of your country-
 women ?'

She spoke and turn'd her sumptuous
 head with eyes
 Of shining expectation fixt on mine.

Then while I dragg'd my brains for such
 a song,
 Cyril, with whom the bell-mouth'd glass
 had wrought,
 Or master'd by the sense of sport, began
 To troll a careless, careless tavern-catch
 Of Moll and Meg, and strange experiences
 Unmeet for ladies. Florian nodded at
 him,
 I frowning ; Psyche flush'd and wann'd
 and shook ;
 The lilylike Melissa droop'd her brows ;
 'Forbear,' the Princess cried ; 'Forbear,
 Sir' I ;
 And heated thro' and thro' with wrath
 and love,
 I smote him on the breast ; he started
 up ;
 There rose a shriek as of a city sack'd ;
 Melissa clamour'd 'Flee the death' ; 'To
 horse'
 Said Ida ; 'home ! to horse !' and fled,
 as flies
 A troop of snowy doves athwart the dusk,
 When some one batters at the dovecote-
 doors,
 Disorderly the women. Alone I stood
 With Florian, cursing Cyril, vext at heart,
 In the pavilion : there like parting hopes
 I heard them passing from me : hoof by
 hoof,
 And every hoof a knell to my desires,
 Clang'd on the bridge ; and then another
 shriek,
 'The Head, the Head, the Princess, O
 the Head !'
 For blind with rage she miss'd the plank,
 and roll'd
 In the river. Out I sprang from glow to
 gloom :
 There whirl'd her white robe like a
 blossom'd branch
 Rapt to the horrible fall : a glance I gave,
 No more ; but woman-vested as I was
 Plunged ; and the flood drew ; yet I
 caught her ; then
 Oaring one arm, and bearing in my left
 The weight of all the hopes of half the
 world,
 Strove to buffet to land in vain. A tree

Was half-disrooted from his place and
stoop'd
To drench his dark locks in the gurgling
wave
Mid-channel. Right on this we drove
and caught,
And grasping down the boughs I gain'd
the shore.

There stood her maidens glimmeringly
group'd
In the hollow bank. One reaching
forward drew
My burthen from mine arms; they cried
'she lives':
They bore her back into the tent: but I,
So much a kind of shame within me
wrought,
Not yet endured to meet her opening eyes,
Nor found my friends; but push'd alone
on foot
(Forsince her horse was lost I left her mine)
Across the woods, and less from Indian
craft
Than beelike instinct hiveward, found at
length
The garden portals. Two great statues,
Art
And Science, Caryatids, lifted up
A weight of emblem, and betwixt were
valves
Of open-work in which the hunter rued
His rash intrusion, manlike, but his brows
Had sprouted, and the branches thereupon
Spread out at top, and grimly spiked the
gates.

A little space was left between the
horns,
Thro' which I clamber'd o'er at top with
pain,
Dropt on the sward, and up the linden
walks,
And, tost on thoughts that changed from
hue to hue,
Now poring on the glowworm, now the
star,
I paced the terrace, till the Bear had
wheel'd
Thro' a great arc his seven slow suns.

A step
Of lightest echo, then a loftier form
Than female, moving thro' the uncertain
gloom,
Disturb'd me with the doubt 'if this
were she,'
But it was Florian. 'Hist O hist,' he
said,
'They seek us: out so late is out of
rules.
Moreover "seize the strangers" is the cry.
How came you here?' I told him: 'I'
said he,
'Last of the train, a moral leper, I,
To whom none spake, half-sick at heart,
return'd.
Arriving all confused among the rest
With hooded brows I crept into the hall,
And, couch'd behind a Judith, underneath
The head of Holofernes peep'd and saw.
Girl after girl was call'd to trial: each
Disclaim'd all knowledge of us: last of
all,
Melissa: trust me, Sir, I pitied her.
She, question'd if she knew us men, at
first
Was silent; closer prest, denied it not:
And then, demanded if her mother knew,
Or Psyche, she affirm'd not, or denied:
From whence the Royal mind, familiar
with her,
Easily gather'd either guilt. She sent
For Psyche, but she was not there; she
call'd
For Psyche's child to cast it from the doors;
She sent for Blanche to accuse her face to
face;
And I slipt out: but whither will you now?
And where are Psyche, Cyril? both are
fled:
What, if together? that were not so well.
Would rather we had never come! I dread
His wildness, and the chances of the dark.'

'And yet,' I said, 'you wrong him more
than I
That struck him: this is proper to the
clown,
Tho' smock'd, or furr'd and purpled, still
the clown,

To harm the thing that trusts him, and to
shame

That which he says he loves : for Cyril,
howe'er

He deal in frolic, as to-night—the song
Might have been worse and sinn'd in
grosser lips

Beyond all pardon—as it is, I hold
These flashes on the surface are not he.
He has a solid base of temperament :
But as the waterlily starts and slides
Upon the level in little puffs of wind,
Tho' anchor'd to the bottom, such is he.'

Scarce had I ceased when from a
tamarisk near
Two Proctors leapt upon us, crying,
'Names' :

He, standing still, was clutch'd ; but I
began

To thrid the musky-circled mazes, wind
And double in and out the boles, and race
By all the fountains : fleet I was of foot :
Before me shower'd the rose in flakes ;
behind

I heard the puff'd pursuer ; at mine ear
Bubbled the nightingale and heeded not,
And secret laughter tickled all my soul.
At last I hook'd my ankle in a vine,
That claspt the feet of a Mnemosyne,
And falling on my face was caught and
known.

They haled us to the Princess where
she sat

High in the hall : above her droop'd a
lamp,

And made the single jewel on her brow
Burn like the mystic fire on a mast-
head,

Prophet of storm : a handmaid on each
side

Bow'd toward her, combing out her long
black hair

Damp from the river ; and close behind
her stood

Eight daughters of the plough, stronger
than men,

Huge women blow'd with health, and
wind, and rain,

And labour. Each was like a Druid rock ;
Or like a spire of land that stands apart
Cleft from the main, and wail'd about
with mews.

Then, as we came, the crowd dividing
clove

An advent to the throne : and therebeside,
Half-naked as if caught at once from bed
And tumbled on the purple footcloth, lay
The lily-shining child ; and on the left,
Bow'd on her palms and folded up from
wrong,

Her round white shoulder shaken with her
sobs,

Melissa knelt ; but Lady Blanche erect
Stood up and spake, an affluent orator.

'It was not thus, O Princess, in old
days :

You prized my counsel, lived upon my
lips :

I led you then to all the Castalies ;
I fed you with the milk of every Muse ;
I loved you like this kneeler, and you me
Your second mother : those were gracious
times.

Then came your new friend : you began
to change—

I saw it and grieved—to slacken and to
cool ;

Till taken with her seeming openness
You turn'd your warmer currents all to
her,

To me you froze : this was my need for all.
Yet I bore up in part from ancient love,
And partly that I hoped to win you back,
And partly conscious of my own deserts,
And partly that you were my civil head,
And chiefly you were born for something
great,

In which I might your fellow-worker be,
When time should serve ; and thus a noble
scheme

Grew up from seed we two long since had
sown ;

In us true growth, in her a Jonah's gourd,
Up in one night and due to sudden sun :
We took this palace ; but even from the
first

You stood in your own light and darken'd mine.
 What student came but that you planed her path
 To Lady Psyche, younger, not so wise,
 A foreigner, and I your countrywoman,
 I your old friend and tried, she new in all?
 But still her lists were swell'd and mine were lean;
 Yet I bore up in hope she would be known:
 Then came these wolves : *they* knew her : *they* endured,
 Long-closeted with her the yesternorn,
 To tell her what they were, and she to hear :
 And me none told : not less to an eye like mine
 A lidless watcher of the public weal,
 Last night, their mask was patent, and my foot
 Was to you : but I thought again : I fear'd
 To meet a cold " We thank you, we shall hear of it
 From Lady Psyche : " you had gone to her,
 She told, perforce ; and winning easy grace,
 No doubt, for slight delay, remain'd among us
 In our young nursery still unknown, the stem
 Less grain than touchwood, while my honest heat
 Were all miscounted as malignant haste
 To push my rival out of place and power.
 But public use required she should be known ;
 And since my oath was ta'en for public use,
 I broke the letter of it to keep the sense.
 I spoke not then at first, but watch'd them well,
 Saw that they kept apart, no mischief done ;
 And yet this day (tho' you should hate me for it)
 I came to tell you ; found that you had gone,
 Ridd'n to the hills, she likewise : now, I thought,
 That surely she will speak ; if not, then I :

Did she ? These monsters blazon'd what they were,
 According to the coarseness of their kind,
 For thus I hear ; and known at last (my work)
 And full of cowardice and guilty shame,
 I grant in her some sense of shame, she flies ;
 And I remain on whom to wreak your rage,
 I, that have lent my life to build up yours,
 I that have wasted here health, wealth, and time,
 And talent, I—you know it—I will not boast :
 Dismiss me, and I prophesy your plan,
 Divorced from my experience, will be chaff
 For every gust of chance, and men will say
 We did not know the real light, but chased
 The wisp that flickers where no foot can tread.'

She ceased : the Princess answer'd coldly, ' Good :
 Your oath is broken : we dismiss you : go.
 For this lost lamb (she pointed to the child)
 Our mind is changed : we take it to ourself.'

Thereat the Lady stretch'd a vulture throat,
 And shot from crooked lips a haggard smile.
 ' The plan was mine. I built the nest ' she said
 ' To hatch the cuckoo. Rise ! ' and stoop'd to updrag
 Melissa : she, half on her mother propt,
 Half-drooping from her, turn'd her face, and cast
 A liquid look on Ida, full of prayer,
 Which melted Florian's fancy as she hung,
 A Niobean daughter, one arm out,
 Appealing to the bolts of Heaven ; and while
 We gazed upon her came a little stir
 About the doors, and on a sudden rush'd
 Among us, out of breath, as one pursued,
 A woman-post in flying raiment. Fear

Stared in her eyes, and chalk'd her face,
and wing'd

Her transit to the throne, whereby she fell
Delivering seal'd dispatches which the
Head

Took half-amazed, and in her lion's mood
Tore open, silent we with blind surmise
Regarding, while she read, till over brow
And cheek and bosom brake the wrath-
ful bloom

As of some fire against a stormy cloud,
When the wild peasant rights himself, the
rick

Flames, and his anger reddens in the
heavens ;

For anger most it seem'd, while now her
breast,

Beaten with some great passion at her
heart,

Palpitated, her hand shook, and we heard
In the dead hush the papers that she held
Rustle : at once the lost lamb at her feet
Sent out a bitter bleating for its dam ;

The plaintive cry jarr'd on her ire ; she
crush'd

The scrolls together, made a sudden turn
As if to speak, but, utterance failing her,
She whirl'd them on to me, as who should
say

' Read,' and I read—two letters—one her
sire's.

' Fair daughter, when we sent the
Prince your way

We knew not your ungracious laws, which
learnt,

We, conscious of what temper you are
built,

Came all in haste to hinder wrong ; but fell
Into his father's hands, who has this night,
You lying close upon his territory,
Slipt round and in the dark invested you,
And here he keeps me hostage for his son.'

The second was my father's running
thus :

' You have our son : touch not a hair of
his head :

Render him up unscathed : give him your
hand :

Cleave to your contract : tho' indeed we
hear

You hold the woman is the better man ;
A rampant heresy, such as if it spread
Would make all women kick against their
Lords

Thro' all the world, and which might well
deserve

That we this night should pluck your
palace down ;

And we will do it, unless you send us back
Our son, on the instant, whole.'

So far I read ;
And then stood up and spoke impetuously.

' O not to pry and peer on your reserve,
But led by golden wishes, and a hope
The child of regal compact, did I break
Your precinct ; not a scorner of your sex
But venerator, zealous it should be
All that it might be : hear me, for I bear,
Tho' man, yet human, whatso'er your
wrongs,

From the flaxen curl to the gray lock a
life

Less mine than yours : my nurse would
tell me of you ;

I habbled for you, as babies for the moon,
Vague brightness ; when a boy, you stoop'd
to me

From all high places, lived in all fair lights,
Came in long breezes rapt from inmost
south

And blown to inmost north ; at eve and
dawn

With Ida, Ida, Ida, rang the woods ;
The leader wildswan in among the stars
Would clang it, and lapt in wreaths of
glowworm light

The mellow breaker murmur'd Ida. Now,
Because I would have reach'd you, had
you been

Sphered up with Cassiopëia, or the en-
throned

Persephonè in Hades, now at length,
Those winters of abeyance all worn out,
A man I came to see you : but, indeed,
Not in this frequency can I lend full
tongue,

O noble Ida, to those thoughts that wait

On you, their centre : let me say but this,
That many a famous man and woman,
town

And landskip, have I heard of, after seen
The dwarfs of presage : tho' when known,
there grew

Another kind of beauty in detail
Made them worth knowing ; but in you
I found

My boyish dream involved and dazzled
down

And master'd, while that after-beauty
makes

Such head from act to act, from hour to
hour,

Within me, that except you slay me here,
According to your bitter statute-book,
I cannot cease to follow you, as they say
The seal does music ; who desire you
more

Than growing boys their manhood ; dying
lips,

With many thousand matters left to do,
The breath of life ; O more than poor
men wealth,

Than sick men health—yours, yours, not
mine—but half

Without you ; with you, whole ; and of
those halves

You worthiest ; and howe'er you block
and bar

Your heart with system out from mine, I
hold

That it becomes no man to nurse despair,
But in the teeth of clench'd antagonisms
To follow up the worthiest till he die :
Yet that I came not all unauthorized
Behold your father's letter.'

On one knee

Kneeling, I gave it, which she caught,
and dash'd

Unopen'd at her feet : a tide of fierce
Invective seem'd to wait behind her lips,
As waits a river level with the dam
Ready to burst and flood the world with
foam :

And so she would have spoken, but there
rose

A hubbub in the court of half the maids
Gather'd together : from the illumined hall

Long lanes of splendour slanted o'er a
press

Of snowy shoulders, thick as herded
ewes,

And rainbow robes, and gems and gem-
like eyes,

And gold and golden heads ; they to and
fro

Fluctuated, as flowers in storm, some red,
some pale,

All open-mouth'd, all gazing to the light,
Some crying there was an army in the
land,

And some that men were in the very
walls,

And some they cared not ; till a clamour
grew

As of a new-world Babel, woman-built,
And worse-confounded : high above them
stood

The placid marble Muses, looking peace.

Not peace she look'd, the Head : but
rising up

Robed in the long night of her deep hair,
so

To the open window moved, remaining
there

Fixt like a beacon-tower above the waves
Of tempest, when the crimson-rolling eye
Glares ruin, and the wild birds on the
light

Dash themselves dead. She stretch'd
her arms and call'd

Across the tumult and the tumult fell.

'What fear ye, brawlers? am not I
your Head?

On me, me, me, the storm first breaks :
I dare

All these male thunderbolts : what is it
ye fear?

Peace ! there are those to avenge us and
they come :

If not,—myself were like enough, O girls,
To unfurl the maiden banner of our rights,
And clad in iron burst the ranks of war,
Or, falling, protomartyr of our cause,
Die : yet I blame you not so much for
fear ;

Six thousand years of fear have made you
 that
 From which I would redeem you : but
 for those
 That stir this hubbub—you and you—I
 know
 Your faces there in the crowd—to-morrow
 morn
 We hold a great convention : then shall
 they
 That love their voices more than duty,
 learn
 With whom they deal, dismiss'd in shame
 to live
 No wiser than their mothers, household
 stuff,
 Live chattels, mincers of each other's
 fame,
 Full of weak poison, turnspits for the clown,
 The drunkard's football, laughing-stocks
 of Time,
 Whose brains are in their hands and in
 their heels,
 But fit to flaunt, to dress, to dance, to
 thrum,
 To tramp, to scream, to burnish, and to
 scour,
 For ever slaves at home and fools abroad.'

She, ending, waved her hands : thereat
 the crowd
 Muttering, dissolved : then with a smile,
 that look'd
 A stroke of cruel sunshine on the cliff,
 When all the glens are drown'd in azure
 gloom
 Of thunder-shower, she floated to us and
 said :

'You have done well and like a
 gentleman,
 And like a prince : you have our thanks
 for all :
 And you look well too in your woman's
 dress :
 Well have you done and like a gentleman.
 You saved our life : we owe you bitter
 thanks :
 Better have died and spilt our bones in
 the flood—

Then men had said—but now—What
 hinders me
 To take such bloody vengeance on you
 both?—
 Yet since our father—Wasps in our good
 hive,
 You would-be quenchers of the light to
 be,
 Barbarians, grosser than your native
 bears—
 O would I had his sceptre for one hour !
 You that have dared to break our bound,
 and gull'd
 Our servants, wrong'd and lied and
 thwarted us—
 I wed with thee ! I bound by precontract
 Your bride, your bonds slave ! not tho' all
 the gold
 That veins the world were pack'd to
 make your crown,
 And every spoken tongue should lord
 you. Sir,
 Your falsehood and yourself are hateful
 to us :

I trample on your offers and on you :
 Begone : we will not look upon you more.
 Here, push them out at gates.'

In wrath she spake.
 Then those eight mighty daughters of the
 plough
 Bent their broad faces toward us and
 address'd
 Their motion : twice I sought to plead
 my cause,
 But on my shoulder hung their heavy
 hands,
 The weight of destiny : so from her face
 They push'd us, down the steps, and
 thro' the court,
 And with grim laughter thrust us out at
 gates.

We cross'd the street and gain'd a petty
 mound
 Beyond it, whence we saw the lights and
 heard
 The voices murmuring. While I listen'd,
 came
 On a sudden the weird seizure and the
 doubt :

I seem'd to move among a world of
ghosts ;

The Princess with her monstrous woman-
guard,

The jest and earnest working side by side,
The cataract and the tumult and the kings
Were shadows ; and the long fantastic
night

With all its doings had and had not been,
And all things were and were not.

This went by

As strangely as it came, and on my spirits
Settled a gentle cloud of melancholy ;
Not long ; I shook it off ; for spite of
doubts

And sudden ghostly shadowings I was one
To whom the touch of all mischance but
came

As night to him that sitting on a hill
Sees the midsummer, midnight, Norway
sun

Set into sunrise ; then we moved away.

Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums,

That beat to battle where he stands ;

Thy face across his fancy comes,

And gives the battle to his hands :

A moment, while the trumpets blow,

He sees his brood about thy knee ;

The next, like fire he meets the foe,

And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

So Lilia sang : we thought her half-
possess'd,

She struck such warbling fury thro' the
words ;

And, after, feigning pique at what she
call'd

The raillery, or grotesque, or false sub-
lime—

Like one that wishes at a dance to change
The music—clapt her hands and cried
for war,

Or some grand fight to kill and make an
end :

And he that next inherited the tale

Half turning to the broken statue, said,

' Sir Ralph has got your colours : if I
prove

Your knight, and fight your battle, what
for me ?'

It chanced, her empty glove upon the
tomb

Lay by her like a model of her hand.

She took it and she flung it. ' Fight '
she said,

' And make us all we would be, great
and good.'

He knightlike in his cap instead of casque,
A cap of Tyrol borrow'd from the hall,
Arranged the favour, and assumed the
Prince.

v

Now, scarce three paces measured from
the mound,

We stumbled on a stationary voice,
And ' Stand, who goes ? ' ' Two from the
palace ' I.

' The second two : they wait,' he said,
' pass on ;

His Highness wakes : ' and one, that
clash'd in arms,

By glimmering lanes and walls of canvas
led

Threading the soldier-city, till we heard
The drowsy folds of our great ensign
shake

From blazon'd lions o'er the imperial tent
Whispers of war.

Entering, the sudden light
Dazed me half-blind : I stood and seem'd
to hear,

As in a poplar grove when a light wind
wakes

A lisping of the innumerable leaf and dies,
Each hissing in his neighbour's ear ; and
then

A strangled titter, out of which there
brake

On all sides, clamouring etiquette to
death,

Unmeasured mirth ; while now the two
old kings

Began to wag their baldness up and down,
The fresh young captains flash'd their
glittering teeth,

The huge bush-bearded Barons heaved
and blew,

And slain with laughter roll'd the gilded
Squire.

At length my Sire, his rough cheek
wet with tears,
Panted from weary sides ' King, you are
free !

We did but keep you surety for our son,
If this be he,—or a draggled mawkin,
thou,

That tends her bristled grunterns in the
sludge : '

For I was drench'd with ooze, and torn
with briers,

More crumpled than a poppy from the
sheath,

And all one rag, disprinc'd from head to
heel.

Then some one sent beneath his vaulted
palm

A whisper'd jest to some one near him,
' Look,

He has been among his shadows.' ' Satan
take

The old women and their shadows ! (thus
the King

Roar'd) make yourself a man to fight with
men.

Go : Cyril told us all.'

As boys that slink

From ferule and the trespass-chiding eye,
Away we stole, and transient in a trice

From what was left of faded woman-
slough

To sheathing splendours and the golden
scale

Of harness, issued in the sun, that now
Leapt from the dewy shoulders of the

Earth,
And hit the Northern hills. Here Cyril

met us.

A little shy at first, but by and by
We twain, with mutual pardon ask'd and
given

For stroke and song, resolder'd peace,
whereon

Follow'd his tale. Amazed he fled away
Thro' the dark land, and later in the night

Had come on Psyche weeping : ' then we
fell

Into your father's hand, and there she
lies,

But will not speak, nor stir.'

He show'd a tent
A stone-shot off : we enter'd in, and there
Among piled arms and rough accoutre-
ments,

Pitiful sight, wrapp'd in a soldier's cloak,
Like some sweet sculpture draped from
head to foot,

And push'd by rude hands from its
pedestal,

All her fair length upon the ground she
lay :

And at her head a follower of the camp,
A charr'd and wrinkled piece of woman-
hood,

Sat watching like a watcher by the dead.

Then Florian knelt, and ' Come' he
whisper'd to her,

' Lift up your head, sweet sister : lie not
thus.

What have you done but right ? you could
not slay

Me, nor your prince : look up : be com-
forted :

Sweet is it to have done the thing one ought,
When fall'n in darker ways.' And like-
wise I :

' Be comforted : have I not lost her too,
In whose least act abides the nameless
charm

That none has else for me ?' She heard,
she moved,

She moan'd, a folded voice ; and up she
sat,

And raised the cloak from brows as pale
and smooth

As those that mourn half-shrouded over
death

In deathless marble. ' Her,' she said,
' my friend—

Parted from her—betray'd her cause and
mine—

Where shall I breathe ? why kept ye not
your faith ?

O base and bad ! what comfort ? none
for me !'

To whom remorseful Cyril, ' Yet I pray
Take comfort : live, dear lady, for your
child !'

At which she lifted up her voice and cried.

'Ah me, my babe, my blossom, ah, my child,
My one sweet child, whom I shall see no more !

For now will cruel Ida keep her back ;
And either she will die from want of care,
Or sicken with ill-usage, when they say
The child is hers—for every little fault,
The child is hers ; and they will beat my girl

Remembering her mother : O my flower !
Or they will take her, they will make her hard,

And she will pass me by in after-life
With some cold reverence worse than were she dead.

Ill mother that I was to leave her there,
To lag behind, scared by the cry they made,

The horror of the shame among them all :
But I will go and sit beside the doors,
And make a wild petition night and day,
Until they hate to hear me like a wind
Wailing for ever, till they open to me,
And lay my little blossom at my feet,
My babe, my sweet Aglaïa, my one child :
And I will take her up and go my way,
And satisfy my soul with kissing her :
Ah ! what might that man not deserve of me

Who gave me back my child ?' 'Be comforted,'

Said Cyril, 'you shall have it : ' but again
She veil'd her brows, and prone she sank,
and so

Like tender things that being caught feign death,

Spoke not, nor stirr'd.

By this a murmur ran
Thro' all the camp and inward raced the scouts

With rumour of Prince Arac hard at hand.
We left her by the woman, and without
Found the gray kings at parle : and 'Look you' cried

My father 'that our compact be fulfill'd :
You have spoilt this child ; she laughs at you and man :

She wrongs herself, her sex, and me, and him :

But red-faced war has rods of steel and fire ;

She yields, or war.'

Then Gama turn'd to me :
'We fear, indeed, you spent a stormy time

With our strange girl : and yet they say that still

You love her. Give us, then, your mind at large :

How say you, war or not ?'

'Not war, if possible,
O king,' I said, 'lest from the abuse of war,

The desecrated shrine, the trampled year,
The smouldering homestead, and the household flower

Torn from the lintel—all the common wrong—

A smoke go up thro' which I loom to her
Three times a monster : now she lightens scorn

At him that mars her plan, but then would hate

(And every voice she talk'd with ratify it,
And every face she look'd on justify it)
The general foe. More soluble is this knot,

By gentleness than war. I want her love.
What were I nigher this altho' we dash'd
Your cities into shards with catapults,
She would not love ;—or brought her chain'd, a slave,

The lifting of whose eyelash is my lord,
Not ever would she love ; but brooding turn

The book of scorn, till all my flitting chance

Were caught within the record of her wrongs,

And crush'd to death : and rather, Sire, than this

I would the old God of war himself were dead,

Forgotten, rusting on his iron hills,
Rotting on some wild shore with ribs of wreck,

Or like an old-world mammoth bulk'd in ice,

Not to be molten out.'

And roughly spake
 My father, 'Tut, you know them not, the
 girls.
 Boy, when I hear you prate I almost think
 That idiot legend credible. Look you,
 Sir!
 Man is the hunter; woman is his game:
 The sleek and shining creatures of the
 chase,
 We hunt them for the beauty of their
 skins;
 They love us for it, and we ride them
 down.
 Wheedling and siding with them! Out!
 for shame!
 Boy, there's no rose that's half so dear to
 them
 As he that does the thing they dare not do,
 Breathing and sounding beauteous battle,
 comes
 With the air of the trumpet round him,
 and leaps in
 Among the women, snares them by the
 score
 Flatter'd and fluster'd, wins, tho' dash'd
 with death
 He reddens what he kisses: thus I won
 Your mother, a good mother, a good wife,
 Worth winning; but this firebrand—
 gentleness
 To such as her! if Cyril spake her true,
 To catch a dragon in a cherry net,
 To trip a tigress with a gossamer,
 Were wisdom to it.'
 'Yea but Sire,' I cried,
 'Wild natures need wise curbs. The
 soldier? No:
 What dares not Ida do that she should
 prize
 The soldier? I beheld her, when she rose
 The yesternight, and storming in extremes,
 Stood for her cause, and flung defiance
 down
 Gagelike to man, and had not shunn'd the
 death,
 No, not the soldier's: yet I hold her, king,
 True woman: but you clash them all in
 one,
 That have as many differences as we.
 The violet varies from the lily as far

As oak from elm: one loves the soldier,
 one
 The silken priest of peace, one this, one
 that,
 And some unworthily; their sinless faith,
 A maiden moon that sparkles on a sty,
 Glorifying clown and satyr; whence they
 need
 More breadth of culture: is not Ida right?
 They worth it? truer to the law within?
 Severer in the logic of a life?
 Twice as magnetic to sweet influences
 Of earth and heaven? and she of whom
 you speak,
 My mother, looks as whole as some serene
 Creation minted in the golden moods
 Of sovereign artists; not a thought, a
 touch,
 But pure as lines of green that streak the
 white
 Of the first snowdrop's inner leaves; I say,
 Not like the piebald miscellany, man,
 Bursts of great heart and slips in sensual
 mire,
 But whole and one: and take them all-
 in-all,
 Were we ourselves but half as good, askind,
 As truthful, much that Ida claims as right
 Had ne'er been mooted, but as frankly
 theirs
 As dues of Nature. To our point: not
 war:
 Lest I lose all.'
 'Nay, nay, you spake but sense'
 Said Gama. 'We remember love ourself
 In our sweet youth; we did not rate him
 then
 This red-hot iron to be shaped with blows.
 You talk almost like Ida: *she* can talk;
 And there is something in it as you say:
 But you talk kindlier: we esteem you for
 it.—
 He seems a gracious and a gallant Prince,
 I would he had our daughter: for the rest,
 Our own detention, why, the causes
 weigh'd,
 Fatherly fears—you used us courteously—
 We would do much to gratify your Prince—
 We pardon it; and for your ingress here
 Upon the skirt and fringe of our fair land,

You did but come as goblins in the night,
Nor in the furrow broke the ploughman's
head,

Nor burnt the grange, nor buss'd the
milking-maid,

Nor robb'd the farmer of his bowl of
cream :

But let your Prince (our royal word upon it,
He comes back safe) ride with us to our
lines,

And speak with Arac : Arac's word is thrice
As ours with Ida : something may be
done—

I know not what—and ours shall see us
friends.

You, likewise, our late guests, if so you
will,

Follow us : who knows ? we four may
build some plan

Foursquare to opposition.'

Here he reach'd

White hands of farewell to my sire, who
growl'd

An answer which, half-muffled in his
beard,

Let so much out as gave us leave to go.

Then rode we with the old king across
the lawns

Beneath huge trees, a thousand rings of
Spring

In every bole, a song on every spray
Of birds that piped their Valentines, and
woke

Desire in me to infuse my tale of love
In the old king's ears, who promised help,
and oozed

All o'er with honey'd answer as we rode
And blossom-fragrant slipt the heavy
dews

Gather'd by night and peace, with each
light air

On our mail'd heads : but other thoughts
than Peace

Burnt in us, when we saw the embattled
squares,

And squadrons of the Prince, trampling
the flowers

With clamour : for among them rose a cry
As if to greet the king ; they made a halt ;

The horses yell'd ; they clash'd their arms ;
the drum

Beat ; merrily-blowing shrill'd the martial
fife ;

And in the blast and bray of the long
horn

And serpent-throated bugle, undulated
The banner : anon to meet us lightly
pranced

Three captains out ; nor ever had I seen
Such thews of men : the midmost and the
highest

Was Arac : all about his motion clung
The shadow of his sister, as the beam
Of the East, that play'd upon them, made
them glance

Like those three stars of the airy Giant's
zone,

That glitter burnish'd by the frosty dark ;
And as the fiery Sirius alters hue,
And bickers into red and emerald, shone
Their morions, wash'd with morning, as
they came.

And I that prated peace, when first I
heard

War-music, felt the blind wildbeast of
force,

Whose home is in the sinews of a man,
Stir in me as to strike : then took the king
His three broad sons ; with now a wander-
ing hand

And now a pointed finger, told them all :
A common light of smiles at our disguise
Broke from their lips, and, ere the windy
jest

Had labour'd down within his ample lungs,
The genial giant, Arac, roll'd himself
Thrice in the saddle, then burst out in
words.

'Our land invaded, 'sdeath ! and he
himself

Your captive, yet my father wills not war :
And, 'sdeath ! myself, what care I, war
or no ?

But then this question of your troth re-
mains :

And there's a downright honest meaning
in her ;

She flies too high, she flies too high! and
yet

She ask'd but space and fairplay for her
scheme;

She prest and prest it on me—I myself,
What know I of these things? but, life
and soul!

I thought her half-right talking of her
wrongs;

I say she flies too high, 'sdeath! what of
that?

I take her for the flower of womankind,
And so I often told her, right or wrong,
And Prince, she can be sweet to those
she loves,

And, right or wrong, I care not: this is
all,

I stand upon her side: she made me
swear it—

'Sdeath—and with solemn rites by candle-
light—

Swear by St. something—I forget her
name—

Her that talk'd down the fifty wisest men;
She was a princess too; and so I swore.
Come, this is all; she will not: waive
your claim:

If not, the foughten field, what else, at
once

Decides it, 'sdeath! against my father's
will.'

I lagg'd in answer loth to render up
My precontract, and loth by brainless war
To cleave the rift of difference deeper
yet;

Till one of those two brothers, half aside
And fingering at the hair about his lip,
To prick us on to combat 'Like to like!
The woman's garment hid the woman's
heart.'

A taunt that clench'd his purpose like a
blow!

For fiery-short was Cyril's counter-scoff,
And sharp I answer'd, touch'd upon the
point

Where idle boys are cowards to their
shame,

'Decide it here: why not? we are three
to three.'

Then spake the third 'But three to
three? no more?

No more, and in our noble sister's cause?
More, more, for honour: every captain
waits

Hungry for honour, angry for his king.
More, more, some fifty on a side, that each
May breathe himself, and quick! by over-
throw

Of these or those, the question settled die.'

'Yea,' answer'd I, 'for this wild wreath
of air,

This flake of rainbow flying on the highest
Foam of men's deeds—this honour, if ye
will.

It needs must be for honour if at all:
Since, what decision? if we fail, we fail,
And if we win, we fail: she would not
keep

Her compact.' 'Sdeath! but we will
send to her,'

Said Arac, 'worthy reasons why she should
Bide by this issue: let our missive thro',
And you shall have her answer by the
word.'

'Boys!' shriek'd the old king, but
vainlier than a hen

To her false daughters in the pool; for
none

Regarded; neither seem'd there more to
say:

Back rode we to my father's camp, and
found

He thrice had sent a herald to the gates,
To learn if Ida yet would cede our claim,
Or by denial flush her babbling wells
With her own people's life: three times
he went:

The first, he blew and blew, but none
appear'd:

He batter'd at the doors; none came:
the next,

An awful voice within had warn'd him
thence:

The third, and those eight daughters of
the plough

Came sallying thro' the gates, and caught
his hair,

And so belabour'd him on rib and cheek
They made him wild : not less one glance
 he caught

Thro' open doors of Ida station'd there
Unshaken, clinging to her purpose, firm
Tho' compass'd by two armies and the
 noise

Of arms ; and standing like a stately Pine
Set in a cataract on an island-crag,
When storm is on the heights, and right
 and left

Suck'd from the dark heart of the long
 hills roll

The torrents, dash'd to the vale : and yet
 her will

Bred will in me to overcome it or fall.

But when I told the king that I was
pledged
To fight in tourney for my bride, he
 clash'd

His iron palms together with a cry ;
Himself would tilt it out among the lads :
But overborne by all his bearded lords
With reasons drawn from age and state,
 perforce

He yielded, wroth and red, with fierce
 demur :

And many a bold knight started up in heat,
And swore to combat for my claim till
 death.

All on this side the palace ran the field
Flat to the garden-wall : and likewise
 here,

Above the garden's glowing blossom-belts,
A column'd entry shone and marble stairs,
And great bronze valves, emboss'd with
 Tomyris

And what she did to Cyrus after fight,
But now fast barr'd : so here upon the flat
All that long morn the lists were hammer'd
 up,

And all that morn the heralds to and fro,
With message and defiance, went and
 came ;

Last, Ida's answer, in a royal hand,
But shaken here and there, and rolling
 words

Oration-like. I kiss'd it and I read.

' O brother, you have known the pangs
 we felt,

What heats of indignation when we heard
Of those that iron-cramp'd their women's
 feet ;

Of lands in which at the altar the poor
 bride

Gives her harsh groom for bridal-gift a
 scourge ;

Of living hearts that crack within the fire
Where smoulder their dead despots ; and
 of those,—

Mothers,—that, all prophetic pity, fling
Their pretty maids in the running flood,
 and swoops

The vulture, beak and talon, at the heart
Made for all noble motion : and I saw
That equal baseness lived in sleeker times
With smoother men : the old leaven
 leaven'd all :

Millions of throats would bawl for civil
 rights,

No woman named : therefore I set my
 face

Against all men, and lived but for mine
 own.

Far off from men I built a fold for them :
I stored it full of rich memorial :

I fenced it round with gallant institutes,
And biting laws to scare the beasts of prey
And prosper'd ; till a rout of saucy boys
Brake on us at our books, and marr'd
 our peace,

Mask'd like our maids, blustering I know
 not what

Of insolence and love, some pretext held
Of baby troth, invalid, since my will
Seal'd not the bond—the striplings !—for
 their sport !—

I tamed my leopards : shall I not tame
 these ?

Or you ? or I ? for since you think me
 touch'd

In honour—what, I would not aught of
 false—

Is not our cause pure ? and whereas I
 know

Your prowess, Arac, and what mother's
 blood

You draw from, fight ; you failing, I abide

What end soever: fail you will not. Still
Take not his life: he risk'd it for my own;
His mother lives: yet whatsoe'er you do,
Fight and fight well; strike and strike
home. O dear

Brothers, the woman's Angel guards you,
you

The sole men to be mingled with our
cause,

The sole men we shall prize in the after-
time,

Your very armour hallow'd, and your
statues

Rear'd, sung to, when, this gad-fly brush'd
aside,

We plant a solid foot into the Time,
And mould a generation strong to move
With claim on claim from right to right,
till she

Whose name is yoked with children's,
know herself;

And Knowledge in our own land make
her free,

And, ever following those two crowned
twins,

Commerce and conquest, shower the fiery
grain

Of freedom broadcast over all that orbs
Between the Northern and the Southern
morn.'

Then came a postscript dash'd across
the rest.

'See that there be no traitors in your
camp:

We seem a nest of traitors—none to trust
Since our arms fail'd—this Egypt-plague
of men!

Almost our maids were better at their
homes,

Than thus man-girdled here: indeed I
think

Our chiefest comfort is the little child
Of one unworthy mother; which she left:
She shall not have it back: the child
shall grow

To prize the authentic mother of her mind.
I took it for an hour in mine own bed
This morning: there the tender orphan
hands

Felt at my heart, and seem'd to charm
from thence

The wrath I nursed against the world:
farewell.'

I ceased; he said, 'Stubborn, but she
may sit

Upon a king's right hand in thunder-
storms.'

And breed up warriors! See now, tho'
yourself

Be dazzled by the wildfire Love to sloughs
That swallow common sense, the spind-
ling king,

This Gama swamp'd in lazy tolerance.
When the man wants weight, the woman
takes it up,

And topples down the scales; but this is
fixt

As are the roots of earth and base of all;
Man for the field and woman for the
hearth:

Man for the sword and for the needle she:
Man with the head and woman with the
heart:

Man to command and woman to obey;
All else confusion. Look you! the gray
mare

Is ill to live with, when her whinny shrills
From tile to scullery, and her small good-
man

Shrinks in his arm-chair while the fires
of Hell

Mix with his hearth: but you—she's yet
a colt—

Take, break her: strongly groom'd and
straitly curb'd

She might not rank with those detestable
That let the bantling scald at home, and
brawl

Their rights or wrongs like potherbs in
the street.

They say she's comely; there's the fairer
chance:

I like her none the less for rating at her!
Besides, the woman wed is not as we,
But suffers change of frame. A lusty brace
Of twins may weed her of her folly. Boy,
The bearing and the training of a child
Is woman's wisdom.'

Thus the hard old king :
 I took my leave, for it was nearly noon :
 I pored upon her letter which I held,
 And on the little clause 'take not his life':
 I mused on that wild morning in the
 woods,
 And on the 'Follow, follow, thou shalt
 win':
 I thought on all the wrathful king had
 said,
 And how the strange betrothment was to
 end :
 Then I remember'd that burnt sorcerer's
 curse
 That one should fight with shadows and
 should fall ;
 And like a flash the weird affection came :
 King, camp and college turn'd to hollow
 shows ;
 I seem'd to move in old memorial tilts,
 And doing battle with forgotten ghosts,
 To dream myself the shadow of a dream :
 And ere I woke it was the point of noon,
 The lists were ready. Empanoplied and
 plumed
 We enter'd in, and waited, fifty there
 Opposed to fifty, till the trumpet blared
 At the barrier like a wild horn in a land
 Of echoes, and a moment, and once more
 The trumpet, and again : at which the
 storm
 Of galloping hoofs bare on the ridge of
 spears
 And riders front to front, until they closed
 In conflict with the crash of shivering
 points,
 And thunder. Yet it seem'd a dream, I
 dream'd
 Of fighting. On his haunches rose the
 steed,
 And into fiery splinters leapt the lance,
 And out of stricken helmets sprang the fire.
 Part sat like rocks : part reel'd but kept
 their seats :
 Part roll'd on the earth and rose again
 and drew :
 Part stumbled mixt with floundering
 horses. Down
 From those two bulks at Arac's side, and
 down

From Arac's arm, as from a giant's flail,
 The large blows rain'd, as here and every-
 where
 He rode the mellay, lord of the ringing
 lists,
 And all the plain,—brand, mace, and
 shaft, and shield—
 Shock'd, like an iron-clanging anvil
 bang'd
 With hammers ; till I thought, can this
 be he
 From Gama's dwarfish loins ? if this be so,
 The mother makes us most—and in my
 dream
 I glanced aside, and saw the palace-front
 Alive with fluttering scarfs and ladies'
 eyes,
 And highest, among the statues, statue-
 like,
 Between a cymbal'd Miriam and a Jael,
 With Psyche's babe, was Ida watching us,
 A single band of gold about her hair,
 Like a Saint's glory up in heaven : but
 she
 No saint—inexorable—no tenderness—
 Too hard, too cruel : yet she sees me
 fight,
 Yea, let her see me fall ! with that I drave
 Among the thickest and bore down a
 Prince,
 And Cyril, one. Yea, let me make my
 dream
 All that I would. But that large-moulded
 man,
 His visage all agrin as at a wake,
 Made at me thro' the press, and, stagger-
 ing back
 With stroke on stroke the horse and
 horseman, came
 As comes a pillar of electric cloud,
 Flaying the roofs and sucking up the
 drains,
 And shadowing down the champaign till
 it strikes
 On a wood, and takes, and breaks, and
 cracks, and splits,
 And twists the grain with such a roar
 that Earth
 Reels, and the herdsmen cry ; for every-
 thing

Gave way before him : only Florian, he
 That loved me closer than his own right
 eye,
 Thrust in between ; but Arac rode him
 down :
 And Cyril seeing it, push'd against the
 Prince,
 With Psyche's colour round his helmet,
 tough,
 Strong, supple, sinew-corded, apt at
 arms ;
 But tougher, heavier, stronger, he that
 smote
 And threw him : last I spurr'd ; I felt
 my veins
 Stretch with fierce heat ; a moment hand
 to hand,
 And sword to sword, and horse to horse
 we hung,
 Till I struck out and shouted ; the blade
 glanced,
 I did but shear a feather, and dream and
 truth
 Flow'd from me ; darkness closed me ;
 and I fell.

VI

Home they brought her warrior dead :
 She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry :
 All her maidens, watching, said,
 'She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low,
 Call'd him worthy to be loved,
 Truest friend and noblest foe ;
 Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
 Lightly to the warrior slept,
 Took the face-cloth from the face ;
 Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
 Set his child upon her knee—
 Like summer tempest came her tears—
 'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'

My dream had never died or lived
 again.

As in some mystic middle state I lay ;
 Seeing I saw not, hearing not I heard :
 Tho', if I saw not, yet they told me all
 So often that I speak as having seen.

For so it seem'd, or so they said to me,
 That all things grew more tragic and
 more strange ;
 That when our side was vanquish'd and
 my cause
 For ever lost, there went up a great cry,
 The Prince is slain. My father heard
 and ran
 In on the lists, and there unlaced my
 casque
 And grovell'd on my body, and after him
 Came Psyche, sorrowing for Aglaia.

But high upon the palace Ida stood
 With Psyche's babe in arm : there on the
 roofs
 Like that great dame of Lapidoth she
 sang.

'Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : the seed,
 The little seed they laugh'd at in the dark,
 Has risen and cleft the soil, and grown a bulk
 Of spanless girth, that lays on every side
 A thousand arms and rushes to the Sun.

'Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : they
 came ;
 The leaves were wet with women's tears : they
 heard
 A noise of songs they would not understand :
 They mark'd it with the red cross to the fall,
 And would have strown it, and are fall'n them-
 selves.

'Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : they
 came,
 The woodmen with their axes : lo the tree !
 But we will make it faggots for the hearth,
 And shape it plank and beam for roof and floor,
 And boats and bridges for the use of men.

'Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n : they
 struck ;
 With their own blows they hurt themselves, nor
 knew
 There dwelt an iron nature in the grain :
 The glittering axe was broken in their arms,
 Their arms were shatter'd to the shoulder blade.

'Our enemies have fall'n, but this shall grow
 A night of Summer from the heat, a breadth
 Of Autumn, dropping fruits of power : and roll'd
 With music in the growing breeze of Time,
 The tops shall strike from star to star, the fangs
 Shall move the stony bases of the world.

'And now, O maids, behold our
 sanctuary
 Is violate, our laws broken : fear we not
 To break them more in their behoof,
 whose arms
 Champion'd our cause and won it with a
 day
 Blanch'd in our annals, and perpetual feast,
 When dames and heroines of the golden
 year
 Shall strip a hundred hollows bare of
 Spring,
 To rain an April of ovation round
 Their statues, borne aloft, the three : but
 come,
 We will be liberal, since our rights are
 won.
 Let them not lie in the tents with coarse
 mankind,
 Ill nurses ; but descend, and proffer these
 The brethren of our blood and cause, that
 there
 Lie bruised and maim'd, the tender
 ministries
 Of female hands and hospitality.'

She spoke, and with the babe yet in
 her arms,
 Descending, burst the great bronze valves,
 and led
 A hundred maids in train across the Park.
 Some cowl'd, and some bare-headed, on
 they came,
 Their feet in flowers, her loveliest : by
 them went
 The enamour'd air sighing, and on their
 curls
 From the high tree the blossom wavering
 fell,
 And over them the tremulous isles of light
 Slided, they moving under shade : but
 Blanche
 At distance follow'd : so they came : anon
 Thro' open field into the lists they wound
 Timorously ; and as the leader of the
 herd
 That holds a stately fretwork to the Sun,
 And follow'd up by a hundred airy does,
 Steps with a tender foot, light as on air,
 The lovely, lordly creature floated on

To where her wounded brethren lay ;
 there stay'd ;
 Knelt on one knee,—the child on one,—
 and prest
 Their hands, and call'd them dear de-
 liverers,
 And happy warriors, and immortal names,
 And said ' You shall not lie in the tents
 but here,
 And nursed by those for whom you fought,
 and served
 With female hands and hospitality.'

Then, whether moved by this, or was
 it chance,
 She past my way. Up started from my
 side
 The old lion, glaring with his whelpless
 eye,
 Silent ; but when she saw me lying stark,
 Dishelm'd and mute, and motionlessly
 pale,
 Cold ev'n to her, she sigh'd ; and when
 she saw
 The haggard father's face and reverend
 beard
 Of grisly twine, all dabbled with the blood
 Of his own son, shudder'd, a twitch of pain
 Tortured her mouth, and o'er her forehead
 past
 A shadow, and her hue changed, and she
 said :
 ' He saved my life : my brother slew him
 for it.' .
 No more : at which the king in bitter
 scorn
 Drew from my neck the painting and the
 tress,
 And held them up : she saw them, and a
 day
 Rose from the distance on her memory,
 When the good Queen, her mother, shore
 the tress
 With kisses, ere the days of Lady Blanche :
 And then once more she look'd at my pale
 face :
 Till understanding all the foolish work
 Of Fancy, and the bitter close of all,
 Her iron will was broken in her mind ;
 Her noble heart was molten in her breast ;

She bow'd, she set the child on the earth ;
 she laid
 A feeling finger on my brows, and
 presently
 'O Sire,' she said, 'he lives : he is not
 dead :
 O let me have him with my brethren here
 In our own palace : we will tend on him
 Like one of these ; if so, by any means,
 To lighten this great clog of thanks, that
 make
 Our progress falter to the woman's goal.'

She said : but at the happy word 'he
 lives'
 My father stoop'd, re-father'd o'er my
 wounds.
 So those two foes above my fallen life,
 With brow to brow like night and evening
 mixt
 Their dark and gray, while Psyche ever
 stole
 A little nearer, till the babe that by us,
 Half-lapt in glowing gauze and golden
 brede,
 Lay like a new-fall'n meteor on the grass,
 Uncared for, spied its mother and began
 A blind and babbling laughter, and to
 dance
 Its body, and reach its fatling innocent
 arms
 And lazy lingering fingers. She the appeal
 Brook'd not, but clamouring out 'Mine—
 mine—not yours,
 It is not yours, but mine : give me the
 child'
 Ceased all on tremble : piteous was the
 cry :
 So stood the unhappy mother open-
 mouth'd,
 And turn'd each face her way : wan was
 her cheek
 With hollow watch, her blooming mantle
 torn,
 Red grief and mother's hunger in her eye,
 And down dead-heavy sank her curls, and
 half
 The sacred mother's bosom, panting, burst
 The laces toward her babe ; but she nor
 cared

Nor knew it, clamouring on, till Ida heard,
 Look'd up, and rising slowly from me,
 stood
 Erect and silent, striking with her glance
 The mother, me, the child ; but he that
 lay
 Beside us, Cyril, batter'd as he was,
 Trail'd himself up on one knee : then he
 drew
 Her robe to meet his lips, and down she
 look'd
 At the arm'd man sideways, pitying as it
 seem'd,
 Or self-involved ; but when she learnt his
 face,
 Remembering his ill-omen'd song, arose
 Once more thro' all her height, and o'er
 him grew
 Tall as a figure lengthen'd on the sand
 When the tide ebbs in sunshine, and he
 said :

'O fair and strong and terrible !
 Lioness
 That with your long locks play the Lion's
 mane !
 But Love and Nature, these are two more
 terrible
 And stronger. See, your foot is on our
 necks,
 We vanquish'd, you the Victor of your
 will.
 What would you more ? give her the
 child ! remain
 Orb'd in your isolation : he is dead,
 Or all as dead : henceforth we let you be :
 Win you the hearts of women ; and
 beware
 Lest, where you seek the common love
 of these,
 The common hate with the revolving
 wheel
 Should drag you down, and some great
 Nemesis
 Break from a darken'd future, crown'd
 with fire,
 And tread you out for ever : but how-
 soe'er
 Fix'd in yourself, never in your own arms
 To hold your own, deny not hers to her,

Give her the child ! O if, I say, you keep
 One pulse that beats true woman, if you
 loved
 The breast that fed or arm that dandled
 you,
 Or own one port of sense not flint to
 prayer,
 Give her the child ! or if you scorn to
 lay it,
 Yourself, in hands so lately claspt with
 yours,
 Or speak to her, your dearest, her one
 fault
 The tenderness, not yours, that could not
 kill,
 Give *me* it : *I* will give it her.'

He said :

At first her eye with slow dilation roll'd
 Dry flame, she listening ; after sank and
 sank
 And, into mournful twilight mellowing,
 dwelt
 Full on the child ; she took it : ' Pretty
 bud !
 Lily of the vale ! half open'd bell of the
 woods !
 Sole comfort of my dark hour, when a
 world
 Of traitorous friend and broken system
 made
 No purple in the distance, mystery,
 Pledge of a love not to be mine, farewell ;
 These men are hard upon us as of old,
 We two must part : and yet how fain
 was I
 To dream thy cause embraced in mine,
 to think
 I might be something to thee, when I felt
 Thy helpless warmth about my barren
 breast
 In the dead prime : but may thy mother
 prove
 As true to thee as false, false, false to me !
 And, if thou needs must bear the yoke,
 I wish it
 Gentle as freedom '—here she kiss'd it :
 then—
 ' All good go with thee ! take it Sir,'
 and so,
 Laid the soft babe in his hard-mailed hands,

Who turn'd half-round to Psyche as she
 sprang
 To meet it, with an eye that swum in
 thanks ;
 Then felt it sound and whole from head
 to foot,
 And hugg'd and never hugg'd it close
 enough,
 And in her hunger mouth'd and mumbled
 it,
 And hid her bosom with it ; after that
 Put on more calm and added suppliantly :

' We two were friends : I go to mine
 own land
 For ever : find some other : as for me
 I scarce am fit for your great plans : yet
 speak to me,
 Say one soft word and let me part for-
 given.'

But Ida spoke not, rapt upon the child.
 Then Arac. ' Ida—'sdeath ! you blame
 the man ;
 You wrong yourselves—the woman is so
 hard
 Upon the woman. Come, a grace to me !
 I am your warrior : I and mine have fought
 Your battle : kiss her ; take her hand,
 she weeps :
 'Sdeath ! I would sooner fight thrice o'er
 than see it.'

But Ida spoke not, gazing on the ground,
 And reddening in the furrows of his chin,
 And moved beyond his custom, Gama
 said :

' I've heard that there is iron in the
 blood,
 And I believe it. Not one word ? not one ?
 Whence drew you this steel temper ? not
 from me,
 Not from your mother, now a saint with
 saints.
 She said you had a heart—I heard her
 say it—
 " Our Ida has a heart "—just ere she died—
 " But see that some one with authority
 Be near her still " and I—I sought for
 one—

All people said she had authority—
 The Lady Blanche : much profit ! Not
 one word ;
 No ! tho' your father sues : see how you
 stand
 Stiff as Lot's wife, and all the good
 knights maim'd,
 I trust that there is no one hurt to death,
 For your wild whim : and was it then
 for this,
 Was it for this we gave our palace up,
 Where we withdrew from summer heats
 and state,
 And had our wine and chess beneath the
 planes,
 And many a pleasant hour with her that's
 gone,
 Ere you were born to vex us ? Is it kind ?
 Speak to her I say : is this not she of
 whom,
 When first she came, all flush'd you said
 to me
 Now had you got a friend of your own
 age,
 Now could you share your thought ; now
 should men see
 Two women faster welded in one love
 Than pairs of wedlock ; she you walk'd
 with, she
 You talk'd with, whole nights long, up
 in the tower,
 Of sine and arc, spheroid and azimuth,
 And right ascension, Heaven knows what ;
 and now
 A word, but one, one little kindly word,
 Not one to spare her : out upon you,
 flint !
 You love nor her, nor me, nor any ; nay,
 You shame your mother's judgment too.
 Not one ?
 You will not ? well—no heart have you,
 or such
 As fancies like the vermin in a nut
 Have fretted all to dust and bitterness.'
 So said the small king moved beyond his
 wont.

But Ida stood nor spoke, drain'd of her
 force
 By many a varying influence and so long.

Down thro' her limbs a drooping languor
 wept :
 Her head a little bent ; and on her mouth
 A doubtful smile dwelt like a clouded
 moon
 In a still water : then brake out my sire,
 Lifting his grim head from my wounds.
 'O you,
 Woman, whom we thought woman even
 now,
 And were half fool'd to let you tend our son,
 Because he might have wish'd it—but we
 see
 The accomplice of your madness unfor-
 given,
 And think that you might mix his draught
 with death,
 When your skies change again : the
 rougher hand
 Is safer : on to the tents : take up the
 Prince.'

 He rose, and while each ear was prick'd
 to attend
 A tempest, thro' the cloud that dimm'd
 her broke
 A genial warmth and light once more,
 and shone,
 Thro' glittering drops on her sad friend.
 'Come hither.
 O Psyche,' she cried out, 'embrace me,
 come,
 Quick while I melt ; make reconcilment
 sure
 With one that cannot keep her mind an
 hour :
 Come to the hollow heart they slander so !
 Kiss and be friends, like children being
 chid !
 I seem no more : I want forgiveness too :
 I should have had to do with none but
 maids,
 That have no links with men. Ah false
 but dear,
 Dear traitor, too much loved, why ?—
 why ?—Yet see,
 Before these kings we embrace you yet
 once more
 With all forgiveness, all oblivion,
 And trust, not love, you less.

And now, O sire,
Grant me your son, to nurse, to wait upon
him,

Like mine own brother. For my debt to
him,

This nightmare weight of gratitude, I
know it ;

Taunt me no more : yourself and yours
shall have

Free adit ; we will scatter all our maids
Till happier times each to her proper
hearth :

What use to keep them here—now ?
grant my prayer.

Help, father, brother, help ; speak to the
king :

Thaw this male nature to some touch of
that

Which kills me with myself, and drags
me down

From my fixt height to mob me up with all
The soft and milky rabble of womankind,
Poor weakling ev'n as they are.'

Passionate tears

Follow'd : the king replied not : Cyril
said :

'Your brother, Lady,—Florian,—ask for
him

Of your great head—for he is wounded
too—

That you may tend upon him with the
prince.'

'Ay so,' said Ida with a bitter smile,

'Our laws are broken : let him enter
too.'

Then Violet, she that sang the mournful
song,

And had a cousin tumbled on the plain,
Petition'd too for him. 'Ay so,' she said,

'I stagger in the stream : I cannot keep
My heart an eddy from the brawling
hour :

We break our laws with ease, but let it
be.'

'Ay so ?' said Blanche : 'Amazed am I
to hear

Your Highness : but your Highness
breaks with ease

The law your Highness did not make :
'twas I.

I had been wedded wife, I knew mankind,
And block'd them out ; but these men
came to woo

Your Highness—verily I think to win.'

So she, and turn'd askance a wintry eye :

But Ida with a voice, that like a bell

Toll'd by an earthquake in a trembling
tower,

Rang ruin, answer'd full of grief and scorn.

'Fling our doors wide ! all, all, not
one, but all,

Not only he, but by my mother's soul,

Whatever man lies wounded, friend or
foe,

Shall enter, if he will. Let our girls flit,
Till the storm die ! but had you stood by
us,

The roar that breaks the Pharos from his
base

Had left us rock. She fain would sting
us too,

But shall not. Pass, and mingle with
your likes.

We brook no further insult but are gone.'

She turn'd ; the very nape of her white
neck

Was rosed with indignation : but the
Prince

Her brother came ; the king her father
charm'd

Her wounded soul with words : nor did
mine own

Refuse her proffer, lastly gave his hand.

Then us they lifted up, dead weights,
and bare

Straight to the doors : to them the doors
gave way

Groaning, and in the Vestal entry shriek'd
The virgin marble under iron heels :

And on they moved and gain'd the hall,
and there

Rested : but great the crush was, and
each base,

To left and right, of those tall columns
drown'd

In silken fluctuation and the swarm
Of female whisperers : at the further end

Was Ida by the throne, the two great cats
Close by her, like supporters on a shield,
Bow-back'd with fear : but in the centre
stood

The common men with rolling eyes ;
amazed

They glared upon the women, and aghast
The women stared at these, all silent,
save

When armour clash'd or jingled while
the day,

Descending, struck athwart the hall, and
shot

A flying splendour out of brass and steel,
That o'er the statues leapt from head to
head,

Now fired an angry Pallas on the helm,
Now set a wrathful Dian's moon on flame,
And now and then an echo started up,
And shuddering fled from room to room,
and died

Of fright in far apartments.

Then the voice
Of Ida sounded, issuing ordinance :

And me they bore up the broad stairs,
and thro'

The long-laid galleries past a hundred
doors

To one deep chamber shut from sound,
and due

To languid limbs and sickness ; left me
in it ;

And others elsewhere they laid ; and all
That afternoon a sound arose of hoof

And chariot, many a maiden passing home
Till happier times ; but some were left of
those

Held sagest, and the great lords out and in,
From those two hosts that lay beside the
walls,

Walk'd at their will, and everything was
changed.

VII

Ask me no more : the moon may draw the sea ;

The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the
shape

With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape ;

But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee ?

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more : what answer should I give ?

I love not hollow cheek or faded eye :

Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die !

Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live ;

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more : thy fate and mine are seal'd ;

I strove against the stream and all in vain :

Let the great river take me to the main :

No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield ;

Ask me no more.

So was their sanctuary violated,

So their fair college turn'd to hospital ;

At first with all confusion : by and by

Sweet order lived again with other laws :

A kindlier influence reign'd ; and every-
where

Low voices with the ministering hand

Hung round the sick : the maidens came,
they talk'd,

They sang, they read : till she not fair
began

To gather light, and she that was, became

Her former beauty treble ; and to and fro

With books, with flowers, with Angel
offices,

Like creatures native unto gracious act,

And in their own clear element, they
moved.

But sadness on the soul of Ida fell,

And hatred of her weakness, blent with
shame.

Old studies fail'd ; seldom she spoke :
but oft

Clomb to the roofs, and gazed alone for
hours

On that disastrous leaguer, swarms of men
Darkening her female field : void was her
use,

And she as one that climbs a peak to gaze
O'er land and main, and sees a great
black cloud

Drag inward from the deeps, a wall of
night,

Blot out the slope of sea from verge to
shore,

And suck the blinding splendour from the
sand,

And quenching lake by lake and tarn by
tarn

Expunge the world : so fared she gazing
 there ;
 So blacken'd all her world in secret,
 blank
 And waste it seem'd and vain ; till down
 she came,
 And found fair peace once more among
 the sick.

And twilight dawn'd ; and morn by
 morn the lark
 Shot up and shrill'd in flickering gyres,
 but I
 Lay silent in the muffled cage of life :
 And twilight gloom'd ; and broader-grown
 the bowers
 Drew the great night into themselves,
 and Heaven,
 Star after star, arose and fell ; but I,
 Deeper than those weird doubts could
 reach me, lay
 Quite sunder'd from the moving Universe,
 Nor knew what eye was on me, nor the
 hand
 That nursed me, more than infants in
 their sleep.

But Psyche tended Florian : with her
 oft,
 Melissa came ; for Blanche had gone, but
 left
 Her child among us, willing she should
 keep
 Court-favour : here and there the small
 bright head,
 A light of healing, glanced about the
 couch,
 Or thro' the parted silks the tender face
 Peep'd, shining in upon the wounded man
 With blush and smile, a medicine in
 themselves
 To wile the length from languorous hours,
 and draw
 The sting from pain ; nor seem'd it strange
 that soon
 He rose up whole, and those fair charities
 Join'd at her side ; nor stranger seem'd
 that hearts
 So gentle, so employ'd, should close in
 love,

Than when two dewdrops on the petal
 shake
 To the same sweet air, and tremble deeper
 down,
 And slip at once all-fragrant into one.

Less prosperously the second suit ob-
 tain'd
 At first with Psyche. Not tho' Blanche
 had sworn
 That after that dark night among the fields
 She needs must wed him for her own good
 name ;
 Not tho' he built upon the babe restored ;
 Nor tho' she liked him, yielded she, but
 fear'd
 To incense the Head once more ; till on
 a day
 When Cyril pleaded, Ida came behind
 Seen but of Psyche : on her foot she hung
 A moment, and she heard, at which her
 face
 A little flush'd, and she past on ; but each
 Assumed from thence a half-consent in-
 volved
 In stillness, plighted troth, and were at
 peace.

Nor only these : Love in the sacred halls
 Held carnival at will, and flying struck
 With showers of random sweet on maid
 and man.
 Nor did her father cease to press my claim,
 Nor did mine own, now reconciled ; nor yet
 Did those twin brothers, risen again and
 whole ;
 Nor Arac, satiate with his victory.

But I lay still, and with me oft she sat :
 Then came a change ; for sometimes I
 would catch
 Her hand in wild delirium, gripe it hard,
 And fling it like a viper off, and shriek
 ' You are not Ida ' ; clasp it once again,
 And call her Ida, tho' I knew her not,
 And call her sweet, as if in irony,
 And call her hard and cold which seem'd
 a truth :
 And still she fear'd that I should lose my
 mind,

And often she believed that I should die :
 Till out of long frustration of her care,
 And pensive tendance in the all-weary
 noons,
 And watches in the dead, the dark, when
 clocks
 Throbb'd thunder thro' the palace floors,
 or call'd
 On flying Time from all their silver
 tongues—

And out of memories of her kindlier days,
 And sidelong glances at my father's grief,
 And at the happy lovers heart in heart—
 And out of hauntings of my spoken love,
 And lonely listenings to my mutter'd
 dream,

And often feeling of the helpless hands,
 And wordless broodings on the wasted
 cheek—

From all a closer interest flourish'd up,
 Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to
 these,

Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with
 tears

Bysome cold morning glacier ; frail at first
 And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
 But such as gather'd colour day by day.

Last I woke sane, but well-nigh close
 to death

For weakness : it was evening : silent light
 Slept on the painted walls, wherein were
 wrought

Two grand designs ; for on one side arose
 The women up in wild revolt, and storm'd
 At the Opian law. Titanic shapes, they
 cramm'd

The forum, and half-crush'd among the
 rest

A dwarf-like Cato cower'd. On the other
 side

Hortensia spoke against the tax ; behind,
 A train of dames : by axe and eagle sat,
 With all their foreheads drawn in Roman
 scowls,

And half the wolf's-milk curdled in their
 veins,

The fierce triumvirs ; and before them
 paused

Hortensia pleading : angry was her face.

I saw the forms : I knew not where I
 was :

They did but look like hollow shows ;
 nor more

Sweet Ida : palm to palm she sat : the dew
 Dwelt in her eyes, and softer all her shape
 And rounder seem'd : I moved : I sigh'd :
 a touch

Came round my wrist, and tears upon my
 hand :

Then all for languor and self-pity ran
 Mine down my face, and with what life I
 had,

And like a flower that cannot all unfold,
 So drench'd it is with tempest, to the sun,
 Yet, as it may, turns toward him, I on her
 Fixt my faint eyes, and utter'd whisper-
 ingly :

‘ If you be, what I think you, some
 sweet dream,

I would but ask you to fulfil yourself :
 But if you be that Ida whom I knew,
 I ask you nothing : only, if a dream,
 Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die
 to-night.

Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I
 die.’

I could no more, but lay like one in
 trance,

That hears his burial talk'd of by his
 friends,

And cannot speak, nor move, nor make
 one sign,

But lies and dreads his doom. She turn'd ;
 she paused ;

She stoop'd ; and out of languor leapt a
 cry ;

Leapt fiery Passion from the brinks of
 death ;

And I believed that in the living world
 My spirit closed with Ida's at the lips ;
 Till back I fell, and from mine arms she
 rose

Glowing all over noble shame ; and all
 Her falser self slipt from her like a robe,
 And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
 Than in her mould that other, when she
 came

From barren deeps to conquer all with
love ;

And down the streaming crystal dropt ;
and she

Far-fleeted by the purple island-sides,
Naked, a double light in air and wave,
To meet her Graces, where they deck'd
her out

For worship without end ; nor end of mine,
Stateliest, for thee ! but mute she glided
forth,

Nor glanced behind her, and I sank and
slept,

Fill'd thro' and thro' with Love, a happy
sleep.

Deep in the night I woke : she, near
me, held

A volume of the Poets of her land :
There to herself, all in low tones, she
read.

' Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white ;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk ;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font :
The fire-fly wakens : waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake :
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.'

I heard her turn the page ; she found
a small
Sweet Idyl, and once more, as low, she
read :

' Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain
height :

What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills ?
But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire ;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down

And find him ; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine ; nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors :
But follow ; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley ; let the wild
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air :
So waste not thou ; but come ; for all the vales
Await thee ; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee ; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet ;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.'

So she low-toned ; while with shut
eyes I lay

Listening ; then look'd. Pale was the
perfect face ;

The bosom with long sighs labour'd ; and
meek

Seem'd the full lips, and mild the lumi-
nous eyes,

And the voice trembled and the hand.
She said

Brokenly, that she knew it, she had fail'd
In sweet humility ; had fail'd in all ;
That all her labour was but as a block
Left in the quarry ; but she still were loth,
She still were loth to yield herself to one
That wholly scorn'd to help their equal
rights

Against the sons of men, and barbarous
laws.

She pray'd me not to judge their cause
from her

That wrong'd it, sought far less for truth
than power

In knowledge : something wild within
her breast,

A greater than all knowledge, beat her
down.

And she had nursed me there from week
to week :

Much had she learnt in little time. In
part

It was ill counsel had misled the girl
To vex true hearts: yet was she but a girl—
'Ah fool, and made myself a Queen of
farce!

When comes another such? never, I think,
Till the Sun drop, dead, from the signs.'

Her voice

Choked, and her forehead sank upon her
hands,

And her great heart thro' all the faultful
Past

Went sorrowing in a pause I dared not
break;

Till notice of a change in the dark world
Was lispt about the acacias, and a bird,
That early woke to feed her little ones,
Sent from a dewy breast a cry for light:
She moved, and at her feet the volume
fell.

'Blame not thyself too much,' I said,
'nor blame

Too much the sons of men and barbarous
laws;

These were the rough ways of the world
till now.

Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that
know

The woman's cause is man's: they rise
or sink

Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or
free:

For she that out of Lethe scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with
man

His nights, his days, moves with him to
one goal,

Stays all the fair young planet in her
hands—

If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow? but work no more
alone!

Our place is much: as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding
her—

Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her
down—

Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undeveloped man,
But diverse: could we make her as the
man,

Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond
is this,

Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw
the world;

She mental breadth, nor fail in childward
care,

Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words;
And so these twain, upon the skirts of
Time,

Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their
powers,

Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other ev'n as those who love.

Then comes the statelier Eden back to
men:

Then reign the world's great bridal,
chaste and calm:

Then springs the crowning race of human-
kind.

May these things be!'

Sighing she spoke 'I fear
They will not.'

'Dear, but let us type them now
In our own lives, and this proud watch-
word rest

Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in
thought,

Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-cell'd heart beating, with one
full stroke,

Life.'

'You cannot love me.'

Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust
to me.'

CONCLUSION

So closed our tale, of which I give you
all

The random scheme as wildly as it rose :
The words are mostly mine ; for when
we ceased

There came a minute's pause, and Walter
said,

' I wish she had not yielded ! ' then to me,
' What, if you drest it up poetically ! '

So pray'd the men, the women : I gave
assent :

Yet how to bind the scatter'd scheme of
seven

Together in one sheaf ? What style could
suit ?

The men required that I should give
throughout

The sort of mock-heroic gigantesque,
With which we banter'd little Lilia first :
The women—and perhaps they felt their
power,

For something in the ballads which they
sang,

Or in their silent influence as they sat,
Had ever seem'd to wrestle with burlesque,
And drove us, last, to quite a solemn
close—

They hated banter, wish'd for something
real,

A gallant fight, a noble princess—why
Not make her true-heroic—true-sublime ?
Or all, they said, as earnest as the close ?
Which yet with such a framework scarce
could be.

Then rose a little feud betwixt the two,
Betwixt the mockers and the realists :

And I, betwixt them both, to please them
both,

And yet to give the story as it rose,
I moved as in a strange diagonal,
And maybe neither pleased myself nor
them.

But Lilia pleased me, for she took no
part

In our dispute : the sequel of the tale
Had touch'd her ; and she sat, she
pluck'd the grass,

She flung it from her, thinking : last, she
fixt

A showery glance upon her aunt, and said,
' You—tell us what we are ' who might
have told,

For she was cramm'd with theories out
of books,

But that there rose a shout : the gates
were closed

At sunset, and the crowd were swarming
now,

To take their leave, about the garden
rails.

So I and some went out to these : we
climb'd

The slopeto Vivian-place, and turning saw
The happy valleys, half in light, and half
Far-shadowing from the west, a land of
peace ;

Gray halls alone among their massive
groves ;

Trim hamlets ; here and there a rustic
tower

Half-lost in belts of hop and breadths of
wheat ;

The shimmering glimpses of a stream ;
the seas ;

A red sail, or a white ; and far beyond,
Imagined more than seen, the skirts of
France.

' Look there, a garden ! ' said my
college friend,

The Tory member's elder son, ' and
there !

God bless the narrow sea which keeps
her off,

And keeps our Britain, whole within
herself,

A nation yet, the rulers and the ruled—
Some sense of duty, something of a faith,
Some reverence for the laws ourselves
have made,

Some patient force to change them when
we will,

Some civic manhood firm against the
crowd—

But yonder, whiff ! there comes a sudden
heat,

The gravest citizen seems to lose his head,
The king is scared, the soldier will not
fight,

The little boys begin to shoot and stab,
A kingdom topples over with a shriek
Like an old woman, and down rolls the
world

In mock heroics stranger than our own ;
Revolts, republics, revolutions, most
No graver than a schoolboys' barring
out ;

Too comic for the solemn things they
are,

Too solemn for the comic touches in
them,

Like our wild Princess with as wise a
dream

As some of theirs—God bless the narrow
seas !

I wish they were a whole Atlantic broad.'

'Have patience,' I replied, 'ourselves
are full

Of social wrong ; and maybe wildest
dreams

Are but the needful preludes of the truth :
For me, the genial day, the happy crowd,
The sport half-science, fill me with a
faith,

This fine old world of ours is but a child
Yet in the go-cart. Patience ! Give it
time

To learn its limbs : there is a hand that
guides.'

In such discourse we gain'd the garden
rails,

And there we saw Sir Walter where he
stood,

Before a tower of crimson holly-hoaks,
Among six boys, head under head, and
look'd

No little lily-handed Baronet he,
A great broad-shoulder'd genial English-
man,

A lord of fat prize-oxen and of sheep,
A raiser of huge melons and of pine,
A patron of some thirty charities,
A pamphleteer on guano and on grain,
A quarter-sessions chairman, abler none ;

Fair-hair'd and redder than a windy
morn ;

Now shaking hands with him, now him,
of those

That stood the nearest—now address'd
to speech—

Who spoke few words and pithy, such as
closed

Welcome, farewell, and welcome for the
year

To follow : a shout rose again, and made
The long line of the approaching rookery
swerve

From the elms, and shook the branches
of the deer

From slope to slope thro' distant ferns,
and rang

Beyond the bourn of sunset ; O, a shout
More joyful than the city-roar that hails
Premier or king ! Why should not these
great Sirs

Give up their parks some dozen times a
year

To let the people breathe ? So thrice
they cried,

I likewise, and in groups they stream'd
away.

But we went back to the Abbey, and
sat on,

So much the gathering darkness charm'd :
we sat

But spoke not, rapt in nameless reverie,
Perchance upon the future man : the
walls

Blacken'd about us, bats wheel'd, and
owls whoop'd,

And gradually the powers of the night,
That range above the region of the wind,
Deepening the courts of twilight broke
them up

Thro' all the silent spaces of the worlds,
Beyond all thought into the Heaven of
Heavens.

Last little Lilia, rising quietly,
Disrobed the glimmering statue of Sir
Ralph

From those rich silks, and home well
pleased we went.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

PUBLISHED IN 1852

I

BURY the Great Duke

With an empire's lamentation,

Let us bury the Great Duke

To the noise of the mourning of a
mighty nation,

Mourning when their leaders fall,

Warriors carry the warrior's pall,

And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II

Where shall we lay the man whom we
deplore?

Here, in streaming London's central roar.

Let the sound of those he wrought for,

And the feet of those he fought for,

Echo round his bones for evermore.

III

Lead out the pageant : sad and slow,

As fits an universal woe,

Let the long long procession go,

And let the sorrowing crowd about it
grow,

And let the mournful martial music blow ;

The last great Englishman is low.

IV

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,

Remembering all his greatness in the
Past.

No more in soldier fashion will he greet

With lifted hand the gazer in the street.

O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute :

Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,

The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,

Whole in himself, a common good.

Mourn for the man of amplest influence,

Yet clearest of ambitious crime,

Our greatest yet with least pretence,

Great in council and great in war,

Foremost captain of his time,

Rich in saving common-sense,

And, as the greatest only are,

In his simplicity sublime.

O good gray head which all men knew,

O voice from which their omens all men
drew,

O iron nerve to true occasion true,

O fall'n at length that tower of strength

Which stood four-square to all the winds
that blew !

Such was he whom we deplore.

The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.

The great World-victor's victor will be
seen no more.

V

All is over and done :

Render thanks to the Giver,

England, for thy son.

Let the bell be toll'd.

Render thanks to the Giver,

And render him to the mould.

Under the cross of gold

That shines over city and river,

There he shall rest for ever

Among the wise and the bold.

Let the bell be toll'd :

And a reverent people behold

The towering car, the sable steeds :

Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,

Dark in its funeral fold.

Let the bell be toll'd :

And a deeper knell in the heart be
knoll'd ;

And the sound of the sorrowing anthem
roll'd

Thro' the dome of the golden cross ;

And the volleying cannon thunder his
loss ;

He knew their voices of old.

For many a time in many a clime

His captain's-ear has heard them boom

Bellowing victory, bellowing doom :

When he with those deep voices wrought,

Guarding realms and kings from shame ;

With those deep voices our dead captain
taught

The tyrant, and asserts his claim

In that dread sound to the great name,

Which he has worn so pure of blame,

In praise and in dispraise the same,

A man of well-attemper'd frame.
 O civic muse, to such a name,
 To such a name for ages long,
 To such a name,
 Preserve a broad approach of fame,
 And ever-echoing avenues of song.

VI

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd
 guest,
 With banner and with music, with soldier
 and with priest,
 With a nation weeping, and breaking on
 my rest?
 Mighty Seaman, this is he
 Was great by land as thou by sea.
 Thine island loves thee well, thou famous
 man,

The greatest sailor since our world began.
 Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
 To thee the greatest soldier comes ;
 For this is he
 Was great by land as thou by sea ;
 His foes were thine ; he kept us free ;
 O give him welcome, this is he
 Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
 And worthy to be laid by thee ;
 For this is England's greatest son,
 He that gain'd a hundred fights,
 Nor ever lost an English gun ;
 This is he that far away
 Against the myriads of Assaye
 Clash'd with his fiery few and won ;
 And underneath another sun,
 Warring on a later day,
 Round affrighted Lisbon drew
 The treble works, the vast designs
 Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
 Where he greatly stood at bay,
 Whence he issued forth anew,
 And ever great and greater grew,
 Beating from the wasted vines
 Back to France her banded swarms,
 Back to France with countless blows,
 Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
 Beyond the Pyrenean pines,
 Follow'd up in valley and glen
 With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
 Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
 And England pouring on her foes.

Such a war had such a close.
 Again their ravening eagle rose
 In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing
 wings,
 And barking for the thrones of kings ;
 Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
 On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler
 down ;

A day of onsets of despair !
 Dash'd on every rocky square
 Their surging charges foam'd themselves
 away ;

Last, the Prussian trumpet blew ;
 Thro' the long-tormented air
 Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,
 And down we swept and charged and
 overthrew.

So great a soldier taught us there,
 What long-enduring hearts could do
 In that world-earthquake, Waterloo !
 Mighty Seaman, tender and true,
 And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
 O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
 O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
 If aught of things that here befall
 Touch a spirit among things divine,
 If love of country move thee there at all,
 Be glad, because his bones are laid by
 thine !

And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
 In full acclaim,
 A people's voice,
 The proof and echo of all human fame,
 A people's voice, when they rejoice
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 Attest their great commander's claim
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to
 him,
 Eternal honour to his name.

VII

A people's voice ! we are a people yet.
 Tho' all men else their nobler dreams
 forget,
 Confused by brainless mobs and lawless
 Powers ;
 Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly
 set
 His Briton in blown seas and storming
 showers,

We have a voice, with which to pay the
 debt
 Of boundless love and reverence and re-
 gret
 To those great men who fought, and kept
 it ours.
 And keep it ours, O God, from brute
 control ;
 O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye,
 the soul
 Of Europe, keep our noble England
 whole,
 And save the one true seed of freedom
 sown
 Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
 That sober freedom out of which there
 springs
 Our loyal passion for our temperate kings ;
 For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
 Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
 And drill the raw world for the march of
 mind,
 Till crowds at length be sane and crowns
 be just.
 But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
 Remember him who led your hosts ;
 He bad you guard the sacred coasts.
 Your cannons moulder on the seaward
 wall ;
 His voice is silent in your council-hall
 For ever ; and whatever tempests lour
 For ever silent ; even if they broke
 In thunder, silent ; yet remember all
 He spoke among you, and the Man who
 spoke ;
 Who never sold the truth to serve the
 hour,
 Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power ;
 Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
 Thro' either babbling world of high and
 low ;
 Whose life was work, whose language rife
 With rugged maxims hewn from life ;
 Who never spoke against a foe ;
 Whose eighty winters freeze with one
 rebuke
 All great self-seekers trampling on the
 right :
 Truth-teller was our England's Alfred
 named ;

Truth-lover was our English Duke ;
 Whatever record leap to light
 He never shall be shamed.

VIII

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars
 Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
 Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
 He, on whom from both her open hands
 Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
 And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
 Yea, let all good things await
 Him who cares not to be great,
 But as he saves or serves the state.
 Not once or twice in our rough island-
 story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory :
 He that walks it, only thirsting
 For the right, and learns to deaden
 Love of self, before his journey closes,
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
 Into glossy purples, which outredden
 All voluptuous garden-roses.
 Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory :
 He, that ever following her commands,
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
 Thro' the long gorge to the far light has
 won
 His path upward, and prevail'd,
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty
 scaled
 Are close upon the shining table-lands
 To which our God Himself is moon and
 sun.
 Such was he : his work is done.
 But while the races of mankind endure,
 Let his great example stand
 Colossal, seen of every land,
 And keep the soldier firm, the statesman
 pure :
 Till in all lands and thro' all human story
 The path of duty be the way to glory :
 And let the land whose hearths he saved
 from shame
 For many and many an age proclaim
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 And when the long-illuminated cities
 flame,
 Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,

With honour, honour, honour, honour to
him,
Eternal honour to his name.

IX

Peace, his triumph will be sung
By some yet unmoulded tongue
Far on in summers that we shall not see :
Peace, it is a day of pain
For one about whose patriarchal knee
Late the little children clung :
O peace, it is a day of pain
For one, upon whose hand and heart and
brain

Once the weight and fate of Europe hung,
Ours the pain, be his the gain !

More than is of man's degree
Must be with us, watching here

At this, our great solemnity.

Whom we see not we revere ;

We revere, and we refrain

From talk of battles loud and vain,

And brawling memories all too free

For such a wise humility

As befits a solemn fane :

We revere, and while we hear

The tides of Music's golden sea

Setting toward eternity,

Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,

Until we doubt not that for one so true

There must be other nobler work to do

Than when he fought at Waterloo,

And Victor he must ever be.

For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill

And break the shore, and evermore

Make and break, and work their will ;

Tho' world on world in myriad myriads
roll

Round us, each with different powers,

And other forms of life than ours,

What know we greater than the soul ?

On God and Godlike men we build our
trust.

Hush, the Dead March wails in the
people's ears :

The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs
and tears :

The black earth yawns : the mortal
disappears ;

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust ;

He is gone who seem'd so great.—
Gone ; but nothing can bereave him
Of the force he made his own
Being here, and we believe him
Something far advanced in State,
And that he wears a truer crown
Than any wreath that man can weave him.
Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave him.
God accept him, Christ receive him.

1852.

THE THIRD OF FEBRUARY

1852

My Lords, we heard you speak : you told
us all

That England's honest censure went
too far ;

That our free press should cease to brawl,
Not sting the fiery Frenchman into
war.

It was our ancient privilege, my Lords,
To fling whate'er we felt, not fearing, into
words.

We love not this French God, the child
of Hell,

Wild War, who breaks the converse of
the wise ;

But though we love kind Peace so well,

We dare not ev'n by silence sanction
lies.

It might be safe our censures to withdraw ;
And yet, my Lords, not well : there is a
higher law.

As long as we remain, we must speak free,
Tho' all the storm of Europe on us
break ;

No little German state are we,

But the one voice in Europe : we *must*
speak ;

That if to-night our greatness were struck
dead,

There might be left some record of the
things we said.

If you be fearful, then must we be bold.
 Our Britain cannot salve a tyrant o'er.
 Better the waste Atlantic roll'd
 On her and us and ours for evermore.
 What ! have we fought for Freedom from
 our prime,
 At last to dodge and palter with a public
 crime ?

Shall we fear *him* ? our own we never
 fear'd.

From our first Charles by force we
 wrung our claims.
 Prick'd by the Papal spur, we rear'd,
 We flung the burthen of the second
 James.

I say, we *never* feared ! and as for these,
 We broke them on the land, we drove
 them on the seas.

And you, my Lords, you make the people
 muse

Indoubt if you be of our Barons' breed—
 Were those your sires who fought at
 Lewes ?

Is this the manly strain of Runnymede ?
 O fall'n nobility, that, overawed,
 Would lisp in honey'd whispers of this
 monstrous fraud !

We feel, at least, that silence here were sin,
 Not ours the fault if we have feeble
 hosts—

If easy patrons of their kin
 Have left the last free race with naked
 coasts !

They knew the precious things they had
 to guard :

For us, we will not spare the tyrant one
 hard word.

Tho' niggard throats of Manchester may
 bawl,

What England was, shall her true sons
 forget ?

We are not cotton-spinners all,
 But some love England and her honour
 yet.

And these in our Thermopylæ shall stand,
 And hold against the world this honour
 of the land.

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

I

HALF a league, half a league,
 Half a league onward,
 All in the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.
 'Forward, the Light Brigade !
 Charge for the guns !' he said :
 Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

II

'Forward, the Light Brigade !'
 Was there a man dismay'd ?
 Not tho' the soldier knew
 Some one had blunder'd :
 Their's not to make reply,
 Their's not to reason why,
 Their's but to do and die :
 Into the valley of Death
 Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,
 Cannon to left of them,
 Cannon in front of them
 Volley'd and thunder'd ;
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,
 Boldly they rode and well,
 Into the jaws of Death,
 Into the mouth of Hell
 Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
 Flash'd as they turn'd in air
 Sabring the gunners there,
 Charging an army, while
 All the world wonder'd :
 Plunged in the battery-smoke
 Right thro' the line they broke ;
 Cossack and Russian
 Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
 Shatter'd and sunder'd.
 Then they rode back, but not
 Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,
 Cannon to left of them,
 Cannon behind them
 Volley'd and thunder'd ;
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,
 While horse and hero fell,
 They that had fought so well
 Came thro' the jaws of Death,
 Back from the mouth of Hell,
 All that was left of them,
 Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade ?
 O the wild charge they made !
 All the world wonder'd.
 Honour the charge they made !
 Honour the Light Brigade,
 Noble six hundred !

ODE SUNG AT THE OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION

I

UPLIFT a thousand voices full and sweet,
 In this wide hall with earth's invention
 stored,
 And praise the invisible universal Lord,
 Who lets once more in peace the nations
 meet,
 Where Science, Art, and Labour have
 outpour'd
 Their myriad horns of plenty at our feet.

II

O silent father of our Kings to be
 Mourn'd in this golden hour of jubilee,
 For this, for all, we weep our thanks to
 thee !

III

The world-compelling plan was thine,—
 And, lo ! the long laborious miles
 Of Palace ; lo ! the giant aisles,
 Rich in model and design ;
 Harvest-tool and husbandry,
 Loom and wheel and enginery,

Secrets of the sullen mine,
 Steel and gold, and corn and wine,
 Fabric rough, or fairy-fine,
 Sunny tokens of the Line,
 Polar marvels, and a feast
 Of wonder, out of West and East,
 And shapes and hues of Art divine !
 All of beauty, all of use,
 That one fair planet can produce,
 Brought from under every star,
 Blown from over every main,
 And mixt, as life is mixt with pain,
 The works of peace with works of war.

IV

Is the goal so far away ?
 Far, how far no tongue can say,
 Let us dream our dream to-day.

V

O ye, the wise who think, the wise who
 reign,
 From growing commerce loose her latest
 chain,
 And let the fair white-wing'd peacemaker
 fly
 To happy havens under all the sky,
 And mix the seasons and the golden
 hours ;
 Till each man find his own in all men's
 good,
 And all men work in noble brotherhood,
 Breaking their mailed fleets and armed
 towers,
 And ruling by obeying Nature's powers,
 And gathering all the fruits of earth and
 crown'd with all her flowers.

A WELCOME TO ALEXANDRA

MARCH 7, 1863

SEA-KINGS' daughter from over the sea,
 Alexandra !
 Saxon and Norman and Dane are we,
 But all of us Danes in our welcome of
 thee, Alexandra !
 Welcome her, thunders of fort and of fleet !
 Welcome her, thundering cheer of the
 street !

Welcome her, all things youthful and
sweet,

Scatter the blossom under her feet !

Break, happy land, into earlier flowers !

Make music, O bird, in the new-budded
bowers !

Blazon your mottoes of blessing and
prayer !

Welcome her, welcome her, all that is ours !

Warble, O bugle, and trumpet, blare !

Flags, flutter out upon turrets and towers !

Flames, on the windy headland flare !

Utter your jubilee, steeple and spire !

Clash, ye bells, in the merry March air !

Flash, ye cities, in rivers of fire !

Rush to the roof, sudden rocket, and
higher

Melt into stars for the land's desire !

Roll and rejoice, jubilant voice,

Roll as a ground-swell dash'd on the
strand,

Roar as the sea when he welcomes the
land,

And welcome her, welcome the land's
desire,

The sea-kings' daughter as happy as fair,

Blissful bride of a blissful heir,

Bride of the heir of the kings of the sea—

O joy to the people and joy to the
throne,

Come to us, love us and make us your
own :

For Saxon or Dane or Norman we,

Teuton or Celt, or whatever we be,

We are each all Dane in our welcome of
thee, Alexandra !

A WELCOME TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS MARIE ALEX- ANDROVNA, DUCHESS OF EDINBURGH

MARCH 7, 1874

I

THE Son of him with whom we strove
for power—

Whose will is lord thro' all his world-
domain—

Who made the serf a man, and burst
his chain—

Has given our Prince his own imperial
Flower,

Alexandrovna.

And welcome, Russian flower, a people's
pride,

To Britain, when her flowers begin to
blow !

From love to love, from home to home
you go,

From mother unto mother, stately bride,
Marie Alexandrovna !

II

The golden news along the steppes is
blown,

And at thy name the Tartar tents are
stirr'd ;

Elburz and all the Caucasus have
heard ;

And all the sultry palms of India known,
Alexandrovna.

The voices of our universal sea

On capes of Afric as on cliffs of Kent,

The Maoris and that Isle of Continent,

And loyal pines of Canada murmur
thee,

Marie Alexandrovna

III

Fair empires branching, both, in lusty
life !—

Yet Harold's England fell to Norman
swords ;

Yet thine own land has bow'd to
Tartar hordes

Since English Harold gave its throne a
wife,

Alexandrovna !

For thrones and peoples are as waifs that
swing,

And float or fall, in endless ebb and
flow ;

But who love best have best the grace
to know

That Love by right divine is deathless
king,

Marie Alexandrovna !

IV

And Love has led thee to the stranger
land,

Where men are bold and strongly say
their say ;—

See, empire upon empire smiles to-
day,

As thou with thy young lover hand in
hand

Alexandrovna !

So now thy fuller life is in the west,

Whose hand at home was gracious to
thy poor :

Thy name was blest within the narrow
door ;

Here also, Marie, shall thy name be blest,
Marie Alexandrovna !

V

Shall fears and jealous hatreds flame again?

Or at thy coming, Princess, every-
where,

The blue heaven break, and some
diviner air

Breathe thro' the world and change the
hearts of men,

Alexandrovna ?

But hearts that change not, love that
cannot cease,

And peace be yours, the peace of soul
in soul !

And howsoever this wild world may roll,
Between your peoples truth and manful
peace,

Alfred—Alexandrovna !

THE GRANDMOTHER

I

AND Willy, my eldest-born, is gone, you say, little Anne?

Ruddy and white, and strong on his legs, he looks like a man.

And Willy's wife has written : she never was over-wise,

Never the wife for Willy : he wouldn't take my advice.

II

For, Annie, you see, her father was not the man to save,

Hadn't a head to manage, and drank himself into his grave.

Pretty enough, very pretty ! but I was against it for one.

Eh !—but he wouldn't hear me—and Willy, you say, is gone.

III

Willy, my beauty, my eldest-born, the flower of the flock ;

Never a man could fling him : for Willy stood like a rock.

'Here's a leg for a babe of a week !' says doctor ; and he would be bound,

There was not his like that year in twenty parishes round.

IV

Strong of his hands, and strong on his legs, but still of his tongue !

I ought to have gone before him : I wonder he went so young.

I cannot cry for him, Annie : I have not long to stay ;

Perhaps I shall see him the sooner, for he lived far away.

V

Why do you look at me, Annie ? you think I am hard and cold ;

But all my children have gone before me, I am so old :

I cannot weep for Willy, nor can I weep for the rest ;

Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

VI

For I remember a quarrel I had with your father, my dear,
All for a slanderous story, that cost me many a tear.
I mean your grandfather, Annie : it cost me a world of woe,
Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

VII

For Jenny, my cousin, had come to the place, and I knew right well
That Jenny had tript in her time : I knew, but I would not tell.
And she to be coming and slandering me, the base little liar !
But the tongue is a fire as you know, my dear, the tongue is a fire:

VIII

And the parson made it his text that week, and he said likewise,
That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies,
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.

IX

And Willy had not been down to the farm for a week and a day ;
And all things look'd half-dead, tho' it was the middle of May.
Jenny, to slander me, who knew what Jenny had been !
But soiling another, Annie, will never make oneself clean.

X

And I cried myself well-nigh blind, and all of an evening late
I climb'd to the top of the garth, and stood by the road at the gate.
The moon like a rick on fire was rising over the dale,
And whit, whit, whit, in the bush beside me chirrup the nightingale.

XI

All of a sudden he stopt : there past by the gate of the farm,
Willy,—he didn't see me,—and Jenny hung on his arm.
Out into the road I started, and spoke I scarce knew how ;
Ah, there's no fool like the old one—it makes me angry now.

XII

Willy stood up like a man, and look'd the thing that he meant ;
Jenny, the viper, made me a mocking curtsy and went.
And I said, ' Let us part : in a hundred years it'll all be the same,
You cannot love me at all, if you love not my good name.'

XIII

And he turn'd, and I saw his eyes all wet, in the sweet moonshine :
' Sweetheart, I love you so well that your good name is mine.
And what do I care for Jane, let her speak of you well or ill ;
But marry me out of hand : we two shall be happy still.'

XIV

'Marry you, Willy !' said I, 'but I needs must speak my mind,
And I fear you'll listen to tales, be jealous and hard and unkind.'
But he turn'd and claspt me in his arms, and answer'd, 'No, love, no';
Seventy years ago, my darling, seventy years ago.

XV

So Willy and I were wedded : I wore a lilac gown ;
And the ringers rang with a will, and he gave the ringers a crown.
But the first that ever I bare was dead before he was born,
Shadow and shine is life, little Annie, flower and thorn.

XVI

That was the first time, too, that ever I thought of death.
There lay the sweet little body that never had drawn a breath.
I had not wept, little Anne, not since I had been a wife ;
But I wept like a child that day, for the babe had fought for his life.

XVII

His dear little face was troubled, as if with anger or pain :
I look'd at the still little body—his trouble had all been in vain.
For Willy I cannot weep, I shall see him another morn :
But I wept like a child for the child that was dead before he was born.

XVIII

But he cheer'd me, my good man, for he seldom said me nay :
Kind, like a man, was he ; like a man, too, would have his way :
Never jealous—not he : we had many a happy year ;
And he died, and I could not weep—my own time seem'd so near.

XIX

But I wish'd it had been God's will that I, too, then could have died :
I began to be tired a little, and fain had slept at his side.
And that was ten years back, or more, if I don't forget :
But as to the children, Annie, they're all about me yet.

XX

Pattering over the boards, my Annie who left me at two,
Patter she goes, my own little Annie, an Annie like you :
Pattering over the boards, she comes and goes at her will,
While Harry is in the five-acre and Charlie ploughing the hill.

XXI

And Harry and Charlie, I hear them too—they sing to their team :
Often they come to the door in a pleasant kind of a dream.
They come and sit by my chair, they hover about my bed—
I am not always certain if they be alive or dead.

XXII

And yet I know for a truth, there's none of them left alive ;
 For Harry went at sixty, your father at sixty-five :
 And Willy, my eldest-born, at nigh threescore and ten ;
 I knew them all as babies, and now they're elderly men.

XXIII

For mine is a time of peace, it is not often I grieve ;
 I am oftener sitting at home in my father's farm at eve :
 And the neighbours come and laugh and gossip, and so do I ;
 I find myself often laughing at things that have long gone by.

XXIV

To be sure the preacher says, our sins should make us sad :
 But mine is a time of peace, and there is Grace to be had ;
 And God, not man, is the Judge of us all when life shall cease ;
 And in this Book, little Annie, the message is one of Peace.

XXV

And age is a time of peace, so it be free from pain,
 And happy has been my life ; but I would not live it again.
 I seem to be tired a little, that's all, and long for rest ;
 Only at your age, Annie, I could have wept with the best.

XXVI

So Willy has gone, my beauty, my eldest-born, my flower ;
 But how can I weep for Willy, he has but gone for an hour,—
 Gone for a minute, my son, from this room into the next ;
 I, too, shall go in a minute. What time have I to be vexed ?

XXVII

And Willy's wife has written, she never was over-wise.
 Get me my glasses, Annie : thank God that I keep my eyes.
 There is but a trifle left you, when I shall have past away.
 But stay with the old woman now : you cannot have long to stay.

NORTHERN FARMER

OLD STYLE

I

WHEER 'asta beän saw long and meä liggin' 'ere aloän ?
 Noorse ? thourt nowt o' a noorse : whoy, Doctor's abeän an' agoän :
 Says that I moänt 'a naw moor aäle : but I beänt a fool :
 Git ma my aäle, fur I beänt a-gawin' to breäk my rule.

II

Doctors, they knaws nowt, fur a says what's nawways true :
 Naw soort o' koind o' use to saây the things that a do.
 I've 'ed my point o' aäle ivry noight sin' I beän 'ere.
 An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight for foorty year.

III

Parson's a beän loikewise, an' a sittin' 'ere o' my bed.
 'The amoighty's a taäkin o' you ¹ to 'issén, my friend,' a said,
 An' a tow'd ma my sins, an's toithe were due, an' I gied it in hond ;
 I done moy duty boy 'um, as I 'a done boy the lond.

IV

Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa mooch to larn.
 But a cast oop, thot a did, 'bout Bessy Marris's barne.
 Thaw a knaws I hallus voätet wi' Squoire an' choorch an' staäte,
 An' i' the woost o' toimes I wur niver agin the raäte.

V

An' I hallus coom'd to 's chooch afoor moy Sally wur deäd,
 An' 'eärd 'um a bummin' awaäy loike a buzzard-clock ² ower my 'eäd,
 An' I niver knaw'd whot a meän'd but I thowt a 'ad summut to saây,
 An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said an' I coom'd awaäy.

VI

Bessy Marris's barne ! tha knaws she laäid it to meä.
 Mowt 'a beän, mayhap, for she wur a bad un, sheä.
 'Siver, I kep 'um, I kep 'um, my lass, tha mun understand ;
 I done moy duty boy 'um as I 'a done boy the lond.

VII

But Parson a cooms an' a goäs, an' a says it eäsy an' freeä
 'The amoighty's a taäkin o' you to 'issén, my friend,' says 'eä.
 I weänt saây men be loiars, thaw summun said it in 'aäste :
 But 'e reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a stubb'd Thurnaby waäste.

VIII

D'ya moind the waäste, my lass ? naw, naw, tha was not born then ;
 Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eärd 'um mysen ;
 Moäst loike a butter-bump,³ fur I 'eärd 'um about an' about,
 But I stubb'd 'um oop wi' the lot, an' raäved an' rembled 'um out.

IX

Keäper's it wur ; fo' they fun 'um theer a-laäid of 'is faäce
 Down i' the woild 'enemies ⁴ afoor I coom'd to the plaäce.
 Noäks or Thimbleby—toäner ⁵ 'ed shot 'um as deäd as a naäil.
 Noäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize—but git ma my aäle.

¹ ou as in hour.² Cockchafer.³ Bittern.⁴ Anemones.⁵ One or other.

X

Dubbut looök at the waäste : theer warn't not feeäd for a cow ;
 Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looök at it now—
 Warn't worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's lots o' feeäd,
 Fourscoor¹ yows upon it an' some on it down i' seeäd.²

XI

Nobbut a bit on it's left, an' I meän'd to 'a stubb'd it at fall,
 Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow thruff it an' all,
 If godamoighty an' parson 'ud nobbut let ma aloän,
 Meä, wi' haäte hoonderd haäcre o' Squoire's, an' lond o' my oän.

XII

Do godamoighty know what a's doing a-taäkin' o' meä ?
 I beänt wonn as saws 'ere a beän an' yonder a peä ;
 An' Squoire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a' dear a' dear !
 And I 'a managed for Squoire coom Michaelmas thutty year.

XIII

A mowt 'a taäen owd Joänes, as 'ant not a 'aäpoth o' sense,
 Or a mowt 'a taäen young Robins—a niver mended a fence :
 But godamoighty a moost taäke meä an' taäke ma now
 Wi' aäf the cows to cauve an' Thurnaby hoälms to plow !

XIV

Looök 'ow quoloty smoiles when they seeäs ma a passin' boy,
 Says to thessén naw doubt 'what a man a beä sewer-loi !'
 Fur they knaws what I beän to Squoire sin fust a coom'd to the 'All ;
 I done moy duty by Squoire an' I done moy duty boy hall.

XV

Squoire's i' Lunnon, an' summun I reckons 'ull 'a to wroite,
 For whoä's to howd the lond ater meä thot muddles ma quoit ;
 Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give it to Joänes,
 Naw, nor a moänt to Robins—a niver rembles the stoäns.

XVI

But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap wi' 'is kittle o' steäm
 Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi' the Divil's oän teäm.
 Sin' I mun doy I mun doy, thaw loife they says is sweet,
 But sin' I mun doy I mun doy, for I couldn abeär to see it.

XVII

What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn bring ma the aäle ?
 Doctor's a 'toättler, lass, an a's hallus i' the owd taäle ;
 I weänt break rules fur Doctor, a knaws naw moor nor a floy ;
 Git ma my aäle I tell tha, an' if I mun doy I mun doy.

¹ ou as in hour.² Clover.

NORTHERN FARMER

NEW STYLE

I

DOSN'T thou 'ear my 'erse's legs, as they canters awaäy ?
 Proputty, proputty, proputty—that's what I 'ears 'em saäy.
 Proputty, proputty, proputty—Sam, thou's an ass for thy paaäns :
 Theer's moor sense i' one o' 'is legs nor in all thy braaäns.

II

Woä—theer's a craw to pluck wi' tha, Sam : yon's parson's 'ouse—
 Dosn't thou know that a man mun be eäther a man or a mouse ?
 Time to think on it then ; for thou'll be twenty to weeäk.¹
 Proputty, proputty—woä then woä—let ma 'ear mysén speak.

III

Me an' thy muther, Sammy, 'as beän a-talkin' o' thee ;
 Thou's beän talkin' to muther, an' she beän a tellin' it me.
 Thou'll not marry for munny—thou's sweet upo' parson's lass—
 Noä—thou'll marry for luvv—an' we boäth on us thinks tha an ass.

IV

Seeä'd her todaäy goä by—Saäint's-daäy—they was ringing the bells.
 She's a beauty thou thinks—an' soä is scoors o' gells,
 Them as 'as munny an' all—wot's a beauty?—the flower as blaws.
 But proputty, proputty sticks, an' proputty, proputty graws.

V

Do'ant be stunt : ² taäke time : I knows what maäkes tha sa mad.
 Warn't I craäzed fur the lasses mysén when I wur a lad ?
 But I know'd a Quaäker feller as often 'as tow'd ma this :
 'Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny is !'

VI

An' I went wheer munny war : an' thy muther coom to 'and,
 Wi' lots o' munny laaid by, an' a nicetish bit o' land.
 Maäybe she warn't a beauty :—I niver giv it a thowt—
 But warn't she as good to cuddle an' kiss as a lass as 'ant nowt ?

VII

Parson's lass 'ant nowt, an' she weänt 'a nowt when 'e's deäd,
 Mun be a guvness, lad, or summut, and addle ³ her breäd :
 Why? fur 'e's nobbut a curate, an' weänt niver git hissen clear,
 An' 'e maäde the bed as 'e ligs on afoor 'e coom'd to the shere.

¹ This week.

■ Obstinate.

³ Earn.

VIII

An' thin 'e coom'd to the parish wi' lots o' Varsity debt,
 Stook to his taail they did, an' 'e 'ant got shut on 'em yet.
 An' 'e ligs on 'is back i' the grip, wi' noän to lend 'im a shuvv,
 Woorse nor a far-welter'd ¹ yowe : fur, Sammy, 'e married fur luvv.

IX

Luvv ? what's luvv ? thou can luvv thy lass an' 'er munny too,
 Maäkin' 'em goä together as they've good right to do.
 Could'n I luvv thy muther by cause o' 'er munny laaïd by ?
 Naäy—fur I luvv'd 'er a vast sight moor fur it : reäson why.

X

Ay an' thy muther says thou wants to marry the lass,
 Cooms of a gentleman burn : an' we boäth on us thinks tha an ass.
 Woä then, proputty, wiltha ?—an ass as near as mays nowt ²—
 Woä then, wiltha ? dangtha !—the bees is as fell as owt. ³

XI

Breäk me a bit o' the esh for his 'eäd, lad, out o' the fence !
 Gentleman burn ! what's gentleman burn ? is it shillins an' pence ?
 Proputty, proputty's ivrything 'ere, an', Sammy, I'm blest
 If it isn't the saäme oop yonder, fur them as 'as it's the best.

XII

Tis'n them as 'as munny as breäks into 'ouses an' steäls,
 Them as 'as coäts to their backs an' taäkes their regular meäls.
 Noä, but it's them as niver knaws wheer a meäl's to be 'ad.
 Taäke my word for it, Sammy, the poor in a loomp is bad.

XIII

Them or thir feythers, tha sees, mun 'a beän a laäzy lot,
 Fur work mun 'a gone to the gittin' whiniver munny was got.
 Feyther 'ad ammost nowt ; leästways 'is munny was 'id.
 But 'e tued an' moil'd 'issén deäd, an' 'e died a good un, 'e did.

XIV

Looök thou theer wheer Wigglesby beck cooms out by the 'ill !
 Feyther run oop to the farm, an' I runs oop to the mill ;
 An' I'll run oop to the brig, an' that thou'll live to see ;
 And if thou marries a good un I'll leäve the land to thee.

XV

Thim's my noätions, Sammy, wheerby I means to stick ;
 But if thou marries a bad un, I'll leäve the land to Dick.—
 Coom oop, proputty, proputty—that's what I 'ears 'im saäy—
 Proputty, proputty, proputty—canter an' canter awaäy.

¹ Or fow-welter'd,—said of a sheep lying on its back.

² Makes nothing.

³ The flies are as fierce as anything.

THE DAISY

WRITTEN AT EDINBURGH

O LOVE, what hours were thine and mine,
In lands of palm and southern pine ;
In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

What Roman strength Turbia show'd
In ruin, by the mountain road ;
How like a gem, beneath, the city
Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.

How richly down the rocky dell
The torrent vineyard streaming fell
To meet the sun and sunny waters,
That only heaved with a summer swell.

What slender campanili grew
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue ;
Where, here and there, on sandy
beaches
A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.

How young Columbus seem'd to rove,
Yet present in his natal grove,
Now watching high on mountain cor-
nice,
And steering, now, from a purple cove,

Now pacing mute by ocean's rim ;
Till, in a narrow street and dim,
I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,
And drank, and loyally drank to him.

Nor knew we well what pleased us most,
Not the clipt palm of which they boast ;
But distant colour, happy hamlet,
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green ;
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean ;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,

Where oleanders flush'd the bed
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread ;
And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten
Of ice, far up on a mountain head.

We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,
Those niched shapes of noble mould,
A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

At Florence too what golden hours,
In those long galleries, were ours ;
What drives about the fresh Cascinè,
Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.

In bright vignettes, and each complete,
Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,
Or palace, how the city glitter'd,
Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.

But when we crost the Lombard plain
Remember what a plague of rain ;
Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma ;
At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain.

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles
Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles ;
Porch-pillars on the lion resting,
And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,
The height, the space, the gloom, the
glory !
A mount of marble, a hundred spires !

I climb'd the roofs at break of day ;
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.
I stood among the silent statues,
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
A thousand shadowy-pencil'd valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last
To Como ; shower and storm and blast
Had blown the lake beyond his limit,
And all was flooded ; and how we past

From Como, when the light was gray,
And in my head, for half the day,
The rich Virgilian rustic measure
Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
 As on The Lariano crept
 To that fair port below the castle
 Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept ;
 Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake
 A cypress in the moonlight shake,
 The moonlight touching o'er a terrace
 One tall Agavè above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,
 And up the snowy Splügen drew,
 But ere we reach'd the highest summit
 I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,
 And now it tells of Italy.
 O love, we two shall go no longer
 To lands of summer across the sea ;

So dear a life your arms enfold
 Whose crying is a cry for gold :
 Yet here to-night in this dark city,
 When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crush'd to hard and dry,
 This nurseling of another sky
 Still in the little book you lent me,
 And where you tenderly laid it by :

And I forgot the clouded Forth,
 The gloom that saddens Heaven and
 Earth,

The bitter east, the misty summer
 And gray metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
 Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,
 Perchance, to dream you still beside me,
 My fancy fled to the South again.

TO THE REV. F. D. MAURICE

COME, when no graver cares employ,
 Godfather, come and see your boy :
 Your presence will be sun in winter,
 Making the little one leap for joy.

For, being of that honest few,
 Who give the Fiend himself his due,
 Should eighty-thousand college-councils
 Thunder 'Anathema,' friend, at you ;

Should all our churchmen foam in spite
 At you, so careful of the right,
 Yet one lay-hearth would give you wel-
 come

(Take it and come) to the Isle of Wight ;

Where, far from noise and smoke of town,
 I watch the twilight falling brown
 All round a careless-order'd garden
 Close to the ridge of a noble down.

You'll have no scandal while you dine,
 But honest talk and wholesome wine,
 And only hear the magpie gossip
 Garrulous under a roof of pine :

For groves of pine on either hand,
 To break the blast of winter, stand ;
 And further on, the hoary Channel
 Tumbles a billow on chalk and sand ;

Where, if below the milky steep
 Some ship of battle slowly creep,
 And on thro' zones of light and shadow
 Glimmer away to the lonely deep,

We might discuss the Northern sin
 Which made a selfish war begin ;
 Dispute the claims, arrange the chances ;
 Emperor, Ottoman, which shall win :

Or whether war's avenging rod
 Shall lash all Europe into blood ;
 Till you should turn to dearer matters,
 Dear to the man that is dear to God ;

How best to help the slender store,
 How mend the dwellings, of the poor ;
 How gain in life, as life advances,
 Valour and charity more and more.

Come, Maurice, come : the lawn as yet
 Is hoar with rime, or spongy-wet ;
 But when the wreath of March has
 blossom'd,
 Crocus, anemone, violet,

Or later, pay one visit here,
 For those are few we hold as dear ;
 Nor pay but one, but come for many,
 Many and many a happy year.

January, 1854.

WILL

I

O WELL for him whose will is strong !
 He suffers, but he will not suffer long ;
 He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong :
 For him nor moves the loud world's
 random mock,
 Nor all Calamity's hugest waves confound,
 Who seems a promontory of rock,
 That, compass'd round with turbulent
 sound,
 In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
 Tempest-buffed, citadel-crown'd.

II

But ill for him who, bettering not with time,
 Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended
 Will,
 And ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,
 Or seeming-genial venial fault,
 Recurring and suggesting still !
 He seems as one whose footsteps halt,
 Toiling in immeasurable sand,
 And o'er a weary sultry land,
 Far beneath a blazing vault,
 Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,
 The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

IN THE VALLEY OF
CAUTERETZ

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest
 white,
 Deepening thy voice with the deepening
 of the night,
 All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
 I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty
 years ago.
 All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day,
 The two and thirty years were a mist that
 rolls away ;
 For all along the valley, down thy rocky
 bed,
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice
 of the dead,
 And all along the valley, by rock and
 cave and tree,
 The voice of the dead was a living voice
 to me.

IN THE GARDEN AT
SWAINSTON

NIGHTINGALES warbled without,
 Within was weeping for thee :
 Shadows of three dead men
 Walk'd in the walks with me,
 Shadows of three dead men and thou
 wast one of the three.
 Nightingales sang in his woods :
 The Master was far away :
 Nightingales warbled and sang
 Of a passion that lasts but a day ;
 Still in the house in his coffin the Prince
 of courtesy lay.

Two dead men have I known
 In courtesy like to thee :
 Two dead men have I loved
 With a love that ever will be :
 Three dead men have I loved and thou
 art last of the three.

THE FLOWER

ONCE in a golden hour
 I cast to earth a seed.
 Up there came a flower,
 The people said, a weed.

To and fro they went
 Thro' my garden-bower,
 And muttering discontent
 Cursed me and my flower.

Then it grew so tall
 It wore a crown of light,
 But thieves from o'er the wall
 Stole the seed by night.

Sow'd it far and wide
 By every town and tower,
 Till all the people cried,
 'Splendid is the flower.'

Read my little fable :
 He that runs may read.
 Most can raise the flowers now,
 For all have got the seed.

And some are pretty enough,
And some are poor indeed ;
And now again the people
Call it but a weed.

REQUIESCAT

FAIR is her cottage in its place,
Where yon broad water sweetly slowly
glides.

It sees itself from thatch to base
Dream in the sliding tides.

And fairer she, but ah how soon to die !
Her quiet dream of life this hour may
cease.

Her peaceful being slowly passes by
To some more perfect peace.

THE SAILOR BOY

HE rose at dawn and, fired with hope,
Shot o'er the seething harbour-bar,
And reach'd the ship and caught the rope,
And whistled to the morning star.

And while he whistled long and loud
He heard a fierce mermaiden cry,
'O boy, tho' thou art young and proud,
I see the place where thou wilt lie.

'The sands and yeasty surges mix
In caves about the dreary bay,
And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,
And in thy heart the scrawl shall play.'

'Fool,' he answer'd, 'death is sure
To those that stay and those that roam,
But I will nevermore endure
To sit with empty hands at home.

'My mother clings about my neck,
My sisters crying, "Stay for shame";
My father raves of death and wreck,
They are all to blame, they are all to
blame.

'God help me ! save I take my part
Of danger on the roaring sea,
A devil rises in my heart,
Far worse than any death to me.'

THE ISLET

'WHITHER, O whither, love, shall we go,
For a score of sweet little summers or so?'
The sweet little wife of the singer said,
On the day that follow'd the day she was
wed,

'Whither, O whither, love, shall we go?'
And the singer shaking his curly head
Turn'd as he sat, and struck the keys
There at his right with a sudden crash,
Singing, 'And shall it be over the seas
With a crew that is neither rude nor rash,
But a bevy of Eroses apple-cheek'd,
In a shallop of crystal ivory-beak'd,
With a satin sail of a ruby glow,
To a sweet little Eden on earth that I
know,

A mountain islet pointed and peak'd ;
Waves on a diamond shingle dash,
Cataract brooks to the ocean run,
Fairly-delicate palaces shine
Mixt with myrtle and clad with vine,
And overstream'd and silvery-streak'd
With many a rivulet high against the
Sun

The facets of the glorious mountain flash
Above the valleys of palm and pine.'

'Thither, O thither, love, let us go.'

'No, no, no !
For in all that exquisite isle, my dear,
There is but one bird with a musical
throat,

And his compass is but of a single note,
That it makes one weary to hear.'

'Mock me not ! mock me not ! love, let
us go.'

'No, love, no.
For the bud ever breaks into bloom on
the tree,
And a storm never wakes on the lonely
sea,

And a worm is there in the lonely wood,
That pierces the liver and blackens the
blood ;

And makes it a sorrow to be.'

CHILD-SONGS

I

THE CITY CHILD

DAINTY little maiden, whither would you
wander ?

Whither from this pretty home, the
home where mother dwells ?

'Far and far away,' said the dainty little
maiden,

'All among the gardens, auriculas,
anemones,

Roses and lilies and Canterbury-bells.'

Dainty little maiden, whither would you
wander ?

Whither from this pretty house, this
city-house of ours ?

'Far and far away,' said the dainty little
maiden,

'All among the meadows, the clover and
the clematis,

Daisies and kingcups and honeysuckle-
flowers.'

II

MINNIE AND WINNIE

MINNIE and Winnie

Slept in a shell.

Sleep, little ladies !

And they slept well.

Pink was the shell within,

Silver without ;

Sounds of the great sea

Wander'd about.

Sleep, little ladies !

Wake not soon !

Echo on echo

Dies to the moon.

Two bright stars

Peep'd into the shell.

'What are they dreaming of ?

Who can tell ?'

Started a green linnet

Out of the croft ;

Wake, little ladies,

The sun is aloft !

THE SPITEFUL LETTER

HERE, it is here, the close of the year,
And with it a spiteful letter.

My name in song has done him much
wrong,

For himself has done much better.

O little bard, is your lot so hard,

If men neglect your pages ?

I think not much of yours or of mine,

I hear the roll of the ages.

Rhymes and rhymes in the range of the
times !

Are mine for the moment stronger ?

Yet hate me not, but abide your lot,

I last but a moment longer.

This faded leaf, our names are as brief ;

What room is left for a hater ?

Yet the yellow leaf hates the greener leaf,

For it hangs one moment later.

Greater than I—is that your cry ?

And men will live to see it.

Well—if it be so—so it is, you know ;

And if it be so, so be it.

Brief, brief is a summer leaf,

But this is the time of hollies.

O hollies and ivies and evergreens,

How I hate the spites and the follies !

LITERARY SQUABBLES

AH God! the petty fools of rhyme

That shriek and sweat in pigmy wars

Before the stony face of Time,

And look'd at by the silent stars :

Who hate each other for a song,

And do their little best to bite

And pinch their brethren in the throng,

And scratch the very dead for spite :

And strain to make an inch of room

For their sweet selves, and cannot hear

The sullen Lethe rolling doom

On them and theirs and all things
here :

When one small touch of Charity
 Could lift them nearer God-like state
 Than if the crowded Orb should cry
 Like those who cried Diana great :

And I too, talk, and lose the touch
 I talk of. Surely, after all,
 The noblest answer unto such
 Is perfect stillness when they brawl.

THE VICTIM

I

A PLAGUE upon the people fell,
 A famine after laid them low,
 Then thorpe and byre arose in fire,
 For on them brake the sudden foe ;
 So thick they died the people cried,
 'The Gods are moved against the land.'
 The Priest in horror about his altar
 To Thor and Odin lifted a hand :
 'Help us from famine
 And plague and strife !
 What would you have of us ?
 Human life ?
 Were it our nearest,
 Were it our dearest,
 (Answer, O answer)
 We give you his life.'

II

But still the foeman spoil'd and burn'd,
 And cattle died, and deer in wood,
 And bird in air, and fishes turn'd
 And whiten'd all the rolling flood ;
 And dead men lay all over the way,
 Or down in a furrow scathed with flame :
 And ever and aye the Priesthood moan'd,
 Till at last it seem'd that an answer
 came.

'The King is happy
 In child and wife ;
 Take you his dearest,
 Give us a life.'

III

The Priest went out by heath and hill ;
 The King was hunting in the wild ;
 They found the mother sitting still ;
 She cast her arms about the child.

The child was only eight summers old,
 His beauty still with his years increased,
 His face was ruddy, his hair was gold,
 He seem'd a victim due to the priest.
 The Priest beheld him,
 And cried with joy,
 'The Gods have answer'd :
 We give them the boy.'

IV

The King return'd from out the wild,
 He bore but little game in hand ;
 The mother said, 'They have taken the
 child
 To spill his blood and heal the land :
 The land is sick, the people diseased,
 And blight and famine on all the lea :
 The holy Gods, they must be appeased,
 So I pray you tell the truth to me.
 They have taken our son,
 They will have his life.
 Is *he* your dearest ?
 Or I, the wife ?'

V

The King bent low, with hand on brow,
 He stay'd his arms upon his knee :
 'O wife, what use to answer now ?
 For now the Priest has judged for me.'
 The King was shaken with holy fear ;
 'The Gods,' he said, 'would have
 chosen well ;
 Yet both are near, and both are dear,
 And which the dearest I cannot tell !'
 But the Priest was happy,
 His victim won :
 'We have his dearest,
 His only son !'

VI

The rites prepared, the victim bared,
 The knife uprising toward the blow
 To the altar-stone she sprang alone,
 'Me, not my darling, no !'
 He caught her away with a sudden cry ;
 Suddenly from him brake his wife,
 And shrieking 'I am his dearest, I—
 I am his dearest !' rush'd on the
 knife.

And the Priest was happy,
 'O, Father Odin,
 We give you a life.

Which was his nearest ?
 Who was his dearest ?
 The Gods have answer'd ;
 We give them the wife !'

WAGES

GLORY of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
 Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
 Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
 Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she :
 Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

The wages of sin is death : if the wages of Virtue be dust,
 Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly ?
 She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
 To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky :
 Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains—
 Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns ?

Is not the Vision He ? tho' He be not that which He seems ?
 Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams ?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
 Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him ?

Dark is the world to thee : thyself art the reason why ;
 For is He not all but that which has power to feel 'I am I' ?

Glory about thee, without thee ; and thou fulfillest thy doom
 Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and gloom.

Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
 Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise ; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
 For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some : no God at all, says the fool ;
 For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool ;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see ;
 But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He ?

THE VOICE AND THE PEAK

I

THE voice and the Peak
Far over summit and lawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones
of dawn !

II

All night have I heard the voice
Rave over the rocky bar,
But thou wert silent in heaven,
Above thee glided the star.

III

Hast thou no voice, O Peak,
That standest high above all ?
'I am the voice of the Peak,
I roar and rave for I fall.

IV

'A thousand voices go
To North, South, East, and West ;
They leave the heights and are troubled,
And moan and sink to their rest.

V

'The fields are fair beside them,
The chestnut towers in his bloom ;
But they—they feel the desire of the deep—
Fall, and follow their doom.

VI

'The deep has power on the height,
And the height has power on the deep ;
They are raised for ever and ever,
And sink again into sleep.'

VII

Not raised for ever and ever,
But when their cycle is o'er,
The valley, the voice, the peak, the star
Pass, and are found no more.

VIII

The Peak is high and flush'd
At his highest with sunrise fire ;
The Peak is high, and the stars are high,
And the thought of a man is higher.

IX

A deep below the deep,
And a height beyond the height !
Our hearing is not hearing,
And our seeing is not sight.

X

The voice and the Peak
Far into heaven withdrawn,
The lone glow and long roar
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones
of dawn !

FLOWER in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in
all,
I should know what God and man is.

A DEDICATION

DEAR, near and true—no truer Time
himself
Can prove you, tho' he make you ever-
more
Dearer and nearer, as the rapid of life
Shoots to the fall—take this and pray
that he
Who wrote it, honouring your sweet faith
in him,
May trust himself ; and after praise and
scorn,
As one who feels the immeasurable
world,
Attain the wise indifference of the wise ;
And after Autumn past—if left to pass
His autumn into seeming-leafless days—
Draw toward the long frost and longest
night,
Wearing his wisdom lightly, like the
fruit
Which in our winter woodland looks a
flower.¹

¹ The fruit of the Spindle-tree (*Euonymus Europæus*).

EXPERIMENTS

BOÄDICEA

WHILE about the shore of Mona those Neronian legionaries
 Burnt and broke the grove and altar of the Druid and Druidess,
 Far in the East Boädicéa, standing loftily charioted,
 Mad and maddening all that heard her in her fierce volubility,
 Girt by half the tribes of Britain, near the colony Cámulodúne,
 Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters o'er a wild confederacy.

‘ They that scorn the tribes and call us Britain’s barbarous populaces,
 Did they hear me, would they listen, did they pity me supplicating?
 Shall I heed them in their anguish? shall I brook to be supplicated?
 Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant!
 Must their ever-ravelling eagle’s beak and talon annihilate us?
 Tear the noble heart of Britain, leave it gorily quivering?
 Bark an answer, Britain’s raven! bark and blacken innumerable,
 Blacken round the Roman carrion, make the carcase a skeleton,
 Kite and kestrel, wolf and wolfkin, from the wilderness, wallow in it,
 Till the face of Bel be brighten’d, Taranis be propitiated.
 Lo their colony half-defended! lo their colony, Cámulodúne!
 There the horde of Roman robbers mock at a barbarous adversary.
 There the hive of Roman liars worship an emperor-idiot.
 Such is Rome, and this her deity: hear it, Spirit of Cássivëlaú!n!

‘ Hear it, Gods! the Gods have heard it, O Icenian, O Coritanian!
 Doubt not ye the Gods have answer’d, Catieuchlanian, Trinobant.
 These have told us all their anger in miraculous utterances,
 Thunder, a flying fire in heaven, a murmur heard aërially,
 Phantom sound of blows descending, moan of an enemy massacred,
 Phantom wail of women and children, multitudinous agonies.
 Bloodily flow’d the Tamesa rolling phantom bodies of horses and men;
 Then a phantom colony smoulder’d on the refluxing estuary;
 Lastly yonder yester-even, suddenly giddily tottering—
 There was one who watch’d and told me—down their statue of Victory fell.
 Lo their precious Roman bantling, lo the colony Cámulodúne,
 Shall we teach it a Roman lesson? shall we care to be pitiful?
 Shall we deal with it as an infant? shall we dandle it amorously?

‘ Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant!
 While I roved about the forest, long and bitterly meditating,
 There I heard them in the darkness, at the mystical ceremony,
 Loosely robed in flying raiment, sang the terrible prophetesses,
 “ Fear not, isle of blowing woodland, isle of silvery parapets!
 Tho’ the Roman eagle shadow thee, tho’ the gathering enemy narrow thee,
 Thou shalt wax and he shall dwindle, thou shalt be the mighty one yet!
 Thine the liberty, thine the glory, thine the deeds to be celebrated,

Thine the myriad-rolling ocean, light and shadow illimitable,
 Thine the lands of lasting summer, many-blossoming Paradises,
 Thine the North and thine the South and thine the battle-thunder of God,"
 So they chanted : how shall Britain light upon auguries happier ?
 So they chanted in the darkness, and there cometh a victory now.

' Hear Icenian, Catieuchlanian, hear Coritanian, Trinobant !
 Me the wife of rich Prasútagus, me the lover of liberty,
 Me they seized and me they tortured, me they lash'd and humiliated,
 Me the sport of ribald Veterans, mine of ruffian violators !
 See they sit, they hide their faces, miserable in ignominy !
 Wherefore in me burns an anger, not by blood to be satiated.
 Lo the palaces and the temple, lo the colony Cámulodúne !
 There they ruled, and thence they wasted all the flourishing territory,
 Thither at their will they haled the yellow-ringleted Britoness—
 Bloodily, bloodily fall the battle-axe, unexhausted, inexorable.
 Shout Icenian, Catieuchlanian, shout Coritanian, Trinobant,
 Till the victim hear within and yearn to hurry precipitously
 Like the leaf in a roaring whirlwind, like the smoke in a hurricane whirl'd.
 Lo the colony, there they rioted in the city of Cúnobelíne !
 There they drank in cups of emerald, there at tables of ebony lay,
 Rolling on their purple couches in their tender effeminacy.
 There they dwelt and there they rioted ; there—there—they dwell no more.
 Burst the gates, and burn the palaces, break the works of the statuary,
 Take the hoary Roman head and shatter it, hold it abominable,
 Cut the Roman boy to pieces in his lust and voluptuousness,
 Lash the maiden into swooning, me they lash'd and humiliated,
 Chop the breasts from off the mother, dash the brains of the little one out,
 Up my Britons, on my chariot, on my chargers, trample them under us.'

So the Queen Boädicéa, standing loftily charioted,
 Brandishing in her hand a dart and rolling glances lioness-like,
 Yell'd and shriek'd between her daughters in her fierce volubility.
 Till her people all around the royal chariot agitated,
 Madly dash'd the darts together, writhing barbarous lineaments,
 Made the noise of frosty woodlands, when they shiver in January,
 Roar'd as when the roaring breakers boom and blanch on the precipices,
 Yell'd as when the winds of winter tear an oak on a promontory.
 So the silent colony hearing her tumultuous adversaries
 Clash the darts and on the buckler beat with rapid unanimous hand,
 Thought on all her evil tyrannies, all her pitiless avarice,
 Till she felt the heart within her fall and flutter tremulously,
 Then her pulses at the clamouring of her enemy fainted away.
 Out of evil evil flourishes, out of tyranny tyranny buds.
 Ran the land with Roman slaughter, multitudinous agonies.
 Perish'd many a maid and matron, many a valorous legionary,
 Fell the colony, city, and citadel, London, Verulam, Cámulodúne.

IN QUANTITY

ON TRANSLATIONS OF HOMER

Hexameters and Pentameters

THESE lame hexameters the strong-wing'd music of Homer !

No—but a most burlesque barbarous experiment.

When was a harsher sound ever heard, ye Muses, in England?

When did a frog coarser croak upon our Helicon?

Hexameters no worse than daring Germany gave us,

Barbarous experiment, barbarous hexameters.

MILTON

Alcaics

O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,

O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages ;

Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,

Tower, as the deep-domed empyræan
Rings to the roar of an angel onset—

Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches

Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India

Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods

Whisper in odorous heights of even.

Hendecasyllabics

O YOU chorus of indolent reviewers,
Irresponsible, indolent reviewers,
Look, I come to the test, a tiny poem
All composed in a metre of Catullus,
All in quantity, careful of my motion,
Like the skater on ice that hardly bears him,

Lest I fall unawares before the people,
Waking laughter in indolent reviewers.
Should I flounder awhile without a tumble
Thro' this metrification of Catullus,
They should speak to me not without a welcome,

All that chorus of indolent reviewers.

Hard, hard, hard is it, only not to tumble,
So fantastical is the dainty metre.

Wherefore slight me not wholly, nor believe me

Too presumptuous, indolent reviewers.
O blatant Magazines, regard me rather—
Since I blush to belaud myself a moment—

As some rare little rose, a piece of inmost
Horticultural art, or half coquette-like
Maiden, not to be greeted unbenignly.

SPECIMEN OF A TRANSLATION OF THE ILIAD IN BLANK VERSE

So Hector spake ; the Trojans roar'd
applause ;

Then loosed their sweating horses from
the yoke,

And each beside his chariot bound his
own ;

And oxen from the city, and goodly sheep
In haste they drove, and honey-hearted
wine

And bread from out the houses brought,
and heap'd

Their firewood, and the winds from off
the plain

Roll'd the rich vapour far into the heaven.
And these all night upon the bridge¹ of
war

Sat glorying ; many a fire before them
blazed :

¹ Or, ridge.

As when in heaven the stars about the
moon
Look beautiful, when all the winds are
laid,
And every height comes out, and jutting
peak
And valley, and the immeasurable heavens
Break open to their highest, and all the
stars
Shine, and the Shepherd gladdens in his
heart :

So many a fire between the ships and
stream
Of Xanthus blazed before the towers of
Troy,
A thousand on the plain ; and close by
each
Sat fifty in the blaze of burning fire ;
And eating hoary grain and pulse the
steeds,
Fixt by their cars, waited the golden
dawn. *Iliad* VIII. 542-561.

THE WINDOW ;

OR, THE SONG OF THE WRENS

FOUR years ago Mr. Sullivan requested me to write a little song-cycle, German fashion, for him to exercise his art upon. He had been very successful in setting such old songs as 'Orpheus with his lute,' and I drest up for him, partly in the old style, a puppet, whose almost only merit is, perhaps, that it can dance to Mr. Sullivan's instrument. I am sorry that my four-year-old puppet should have to dance at all in the dark shadow of these days ; but the music is now completed, and I am bound by my promise.

December, 1870.

A. TENNYSON.

THE WINDOW

ON THE HILL

THE lights and shadows fly !
Yonder it brightens and darkens down
on the plain.

A jewel, a jewel dear to a lover's eye !
Oh is it the brook, or a pool, or her
window pane,

When the winds are up in the
morning ?

Clouds that are racing above,
And winds and lights and shadows that
cannot be still,

All running on one way to the home
of my love,

You are all running on, and I stand on
the slope of the hill,

And the winds are up in the morning !

Follow, follow the chase !

And my thoughts are as quick and as
quick, ever on, on, on.

O lights, are you flying over her sweet
little face ?

And my heart is there before you are
come, and gone,
When the winds are up in the
morning !

Follow them down the slope !
And I follow them down to the window
pane of my dear,
And it brightens and darkens and
brightens like my hope,
And it darkens and brightens and darkens
like my fear,

And the winds are up in the
morning.

AT THE WINDOW

Vine, vine and eglantine,
Clasp her window, trail and twine !
Rose, rose and clematis,
Trail and twine and clasp and kiss,
Kiss, kiss ; and make her a bower
All of flowers, and drop me a flower,
Drop me a flower.

Vine, vine and eglantine,
 Cannot a flower, a flower, be mine ?
 Rose, rose and clematis,
 Drop me a flower, a flower, to kiss,
 Kiss, kiss—and out of her bower
 All of flowers, a flower, a flower,
 Dropt, a flower.

GONE

Gone !
 Gone, till the end of the year,
 Gone, and the light gone with her, and
 left me in shadow here !
 Gone—flitted away,
 Taken the stars from the night and the
 sun from the day !
 Gone, and a cloud in my heart, and a
 storm in the air !
 Flown to the east or the west, flitted I
 know not where !
 Down in the south is a flash and a groan :
 she is there ! she is there !

WINTER

The frost is here,
 And fuel is dear,
 And woods are sear,
 And fires burn clear,
 And frost is here
 And has bitten the heel of the going year.

Bite, frost, bite !
 You roll up away from the light
 The blue wood-louse, and the plump
 dormouse,
 And the bees are still'd, and the flies are
 kill'd,
 And you bite far into the heart of the
 house,
 But not into mine.

Bite, frost, bite !
 The woods are all the searer,
 The fuel is all the dearer,
 The fires are all the clearer,
 My spring is all the nearer,
 You have bitten into the heart of the
 earth,
 But not into mine.

SPRING

Birds' love and birds' song
 Flying here and there,
 Birds' song and birds' love,
 And you with gold for hair !
 Birds' song and birds' love,
 Passing with the weather,
 Men's song and men's love,
 To love once and for ever.

Men's love and birds' love,
 And women's love and men's !
 And you my wren with a crown of gold,
 You my queen of the wrens !
 You the queen of the wrens—
 We'll be birds of a feather,
 I'll be King of the Queen of the wrens,
 And all in a nest together.

THE LETTER

Where is another sweet as my sweet,
 Fine of the fine, and shy of the shy ?
 Fine little hands, fine little feet—
 Dewy blue eye.

Shall I write to her ? shall I go ?
 Ask her to marry me by and by ?
 Somebody said that she'd say no ;
 Somebody knows that she'll say ay !

Ay or no, if ask'd to her face ?
 Ay or no, from shy of the shy ?
 Go, little letter, apace, apace,
 Fly ;
 Fly to the light in the valley below—
 Tell my wish to her dewy blue eye :
 Somebody said that she'd say no ;
 Somebody knows that she'll say ay !

NO ANSWER

The mist and the rain, the mist and the
 rain !
 Is it ay or no ? is it ay or no ?
 And never a glimpse of her window pane !
 And I may die but the grass will grow,
 And the grass will grow when I am gone,
 And the wet west wind and the world
 will go on.
 Ay is the song of the wedded spheres,
 No is trouble and cloud and storm,

Ay is life for a hundred years,

No will push me down to the worm,
And when I am there and dead and gone,
The wet west wind and the world will
go on.

The wind and the wet, the wind and the
wet !

Wet west wind how you blow, you
blow !

And never a line from my lady yet !

Is it ay or no ? is it ay or no ?

Blow then, blow, and when I am gone,
The wet west wind and the world may
go on.

NO ANSWER

Winds are loud and you are dumb,

Take my love, for love will come,

Love will come but once a life.

Winds are loud and winds will pass !

Spring is here with leaf and grass :

Take my love and be my wife.

After-likes of maids and men

Are but dainties drest again :

Love me now, you'll love me then :

Love can love but once a life.

THE ANSWER

Two little hands that meet,

Claspt on her seal, my sweet !

Must I take you and break you,

Two little hands that meet ?

I must take you, and break you,

And loving hands must part—

Take, take—break, break—

Break—you may break my heart.

Faint heart never won—

Break, break, and all's done.

AY

Be merry, all birds, to-day,

Be merry on earth as you never were
merry before,

Be merry in heaven, O larks, and far away,

And merry for ever and ever, and one
day more.

Why ?

For it's easy to find a rhyme.

Look, look, how he flits,

The fire-crown'd king of the wrens,
from out of the pine !

Look how they tumble the blossom, the
mad little tits !

'Cuck-oo ! Cuck-oo !' was ever a May
so fine ?

Why ?

For it's easy to find a rhyme.

O merry the linnet and dove,

And swallow and sparrow and thristle,
and have your desire !

O merry my heart, you have gotten the
wings of love,

And flit like the king of the wrens with
a crown of fire.

Why ?

For it's ay ay, ay ay.

WHEN

Sun comes, moon comes,

Time slips away.

Sun sets, moon sets,

Love, fix a day.

'A year hence, a year hence.'

'We shall both be gray.'

'A month hence, a month hence.'

'Far, far away.'

'A week hence, a week hence.'

'Ah, the long delay.'

'Wait a little, wait a little,

You shall fix a day.'

'To-morrow, love, to-morrow,

And that's an age away.'

Blaze upon her window, sun,

And honour all the day.

MARRIAGE MORNING

Light, so low upon earth,

You send a flash to the sun.

Here is the golden close of love,

All my wooing is done.

Oh, the woods and the meadows,

Woods where we hid from the wet,

Stiles where we stay'd to be kind,

Meadows in which we met !

Light, so low in the vale
 You flash and lighten afar,
 For this is the golden morning of love,
 And you are his morning star.
 Flash, I am coming, I come,
 By meadow and stile and wood,
 Oh, lighten into my eyes and my heart,
 Into my heart and my blood !

Heart, are you great enough
 For a love that never tires ?
 O heart, are you great enough for love ?
 I have heard of thorns and briers.
 Over the thorns and briers,
 Over the meadows and stiles,
 Over the world to the end of it
 Flash for a million miles.

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII

STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,
 Whom we, that have not seen thy
 face,
 By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
 Believing where we cannot prove ;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade ;
 Thou madest Life in man and brute ;
 Thou madest Death ; and lo, thy foot
 Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :
 Thou madest man, he knows not
 why,
 He thinks he was not made to die ;
 And thou hast made him : thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
 The highest, holiest manhood, thou :
 Our wills are ours, we know not
 how ;

Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day ;
 They have their day and cease to be :
 They are but broken lights of thee,
 And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith : we cannot know ;
 For knowledge is of things we see ;
 And yet we trust it comes from thee,
 A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
 But more of reverence in us dwell ;
 That mind and soul, according well,
 May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight ;
 We mock thee when we do not fear :
 But help thy foolish ones to bear ;
 Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me ;
 What seem'd my worth since I
 began ;
 For merit lives from man to man,
 And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
 Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
 I trust he lives in thee, and there
 I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
 Confusions of a wasted youth ;
 Forgive them where they fail in truth,
 And in thy wisdom make me wise.

1849.

I

I HELD it truth, with him who sings
 To one clear harp in divers tones,
 That men may rise on stepping-stones
 Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
 And find in loss a gain to match ?
 Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
 The far-off interest of tears ?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
 Let darkness keep her raven gloss :
 Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
 To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
 The long result of love, and boast,
 'Behold the man that loved and lost,
 But all he was is overworn.'

II

Old Yew, which graspest at the stones
 That name the under-lying dead,
 Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
 Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
 And bring the firstling to the flock ;
 And in the dusk of thee, the clock
 Beats out the little lives of men.

O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
 Who changest not in any gale,
 Nor branding summer suns avail
 To touch thy thousand years of gloom :

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
 Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
 I seem to fail from out my blood
 And grow incorporate into thee.

III

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
 O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
 O sweet and bitter in a breath,
 What whispers from thy lying lip ?

'The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run ;
 A web is wov'n across the sky ;
 From out waste places comes a cry,
 And murmurs from the dying sun :

'And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
 With all the music in her tone,
 A hollow echo of my own,—
 A hollow form with empty hands.'

And shall I take a thing so blind,
 Embrace her as my natural good ;
 Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
 Upon the threshold of the mind ?

IV

To Sleep I give my powers away ;
 My will is bondsman to the dark ;
 I sit within a helmless bark,
 And with my heart I muse and say :

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
 That thou should'st fail from thy
 desire,
 Who scarcely darest to inquire,
 'What is it makes me-beat so low ?'

Something it is which thou hast lost,
 Some pleasure from thine early years.
 Break, thou deep vase of chilling
 tears,
 That grief hath shaken into frost !

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
 All night below the darken'd eyes ;
 With morning wakes the will, and
 cries,
 'Thou shalt not be the fool of loss.'

V

I sometimes hold it half a sin
 To put in words the grief I feel ;
 For words, like Nature, half reveal
 And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
 A use in measured language lies ;
 The sad mechanic exercise,
 Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
 Like coarsest clothes against the
 cold :
 But that large grief which these
 enfold
 Is given in outline and no more.

VI

One writes, that 'Other friends remain,'
 That 'Loss is common to the race'—
 And common is the commonplace,
 And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
 My own less bitter, rather more :
 Too common ! Never morning wore
 To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
 Who pledgest now thy gallant son ;
 A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
 Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
 Thy sailor, — while thy head is
 bow'd,
 His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
 Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
 At that last hour to please him well ;
 Who mused on all I had to tell,
 And something written, something
 thought ;

Expecting still his advent home ;
 And ever met him on his way
 With wishes, thinking, 'here to-day,'
 Or 'here to-morrow will he come.'

O somewhere, meek, unconscious dove,
 That sittest ranging golden hair ;
 And glad to find thyself so fair,
 Poor child, that waitest for thy love !

For now her father's chimney glows
 In expectation of a guest ;
 And thinking 'this will please him
 best,'
 She takes a riband or a rose ;

For he will see them on to-night ;
 And with the thought her colour
 burns ;
 And, having left the glass, she turns
 Once more to set a ringlet right ;

And, even when she turn'd, the curse
 Had fallen, and her future Lord
 Was drown'd in passing thro' the
 ford,
 Or kill'd in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end ?
 And what to me remains of good ?
 To her, perpetual maidenhood,
 And unto me no second friend.

VII

Dark house, by which once more I stand
 Here in the long unlovely street,
 Doors, where my heart was used to
 beat
 So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—
 Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
 And like a guilty thing I creep
 At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here ; but far away
 The noise of life begins again,
 And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
 On the bald street breaks the blank day.

VIII

A happy lover who has come
 To look on her that loves him well,
 Who 'lights and rings the 'gateway
 bell,
 And learns her gone and far from home ;

He saddens, all the magic light
 Dies off at once from bower and hall,
 And all the place is dark, and all
 The chambers emptied of delight :

So find I every pleasant spot
 In which we two were wont to meet,
 The field, the chamber and the street,
 For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
 In those deserted walks, may find
 A flower beat with rain and wind,
 Which once she foster'd up with care ;

So seems it in my deep regret,
 O my forsaken heart, with thee
 And this poor flower of poesy
 Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanish'd eye,
 I go to plant it on his tomb,
 That if it can it there may bloom,
 Or dying, there at least may die.

IX

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
 Sail'st the placid ocean-plains
 With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
 Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
 In vain ; a favourable speed
 Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
 Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
As our pure love, thro' early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above ;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the
prow ;

Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love ;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run ;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

X

I hear the noise about thy keel ;
I hear the bell struck in the night :
I see the cabin-window bright ;
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
And travell'd men from foreign lands ;
And letters unto trembling hands ;
And, thy dark freight, a vanish'd life.

So bring him : we have idle dreams :
This look of quiet flatters thus
Our home-bred fancies : O to us,
The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,
That takes the sunshine and the rains,
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God ;

Than if with thee the roaring wells
Should gulphim fathom-deep in brine ;
And hands so often clasp'd in mine,
Should toss with tangle and with shells.

XI

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground :

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the
furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold :

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn
bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening
towers,

To mingle with the bounding main :

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall ;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair :

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in
rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

XII

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
To bear thro' Heaven a tale of woe,
Some dolorous message knit below
The wild pulsation of her wings ;

Like her I go ; I cannot stay ;
I leave this mortal ark behind,
A weight of nerves without a mind,
And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
And reach the glow of southern skies,
And see the sails at distance rise,
And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying ; ' Comes he thus, my friend ?
Is this the end of all my care ?'
And circle moaning in the air :
' Is this the end ? Is this the end ?'

And forward dart again, and play
About the prow, and back return
To where the body sits, and learn
That I have been an hour away.

XIII

Tears of the widower, when he sees
A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
And moves his doubtful arms, and
feels
Her place is empty, fall like these ;

Which weep a loss for ever new,
 A void where heart on heart reposed ;
 And, where warm hands have prest
 and closed,
 Silence, till I be silent too.

Which weep the comrade of my choice,
 An awful thought, a life removed,
 The human-hearted man I loved,
 A Spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come Time, and teach me, many years,
 I do not suffer in a dream ;
 For now so strange do these things
 seem,
 Mine eyes have leisure for their tears ;

My fancies time to rise on wing,
 And glance about the approaching
 sails,
 As tho' they brought but merchants'
 bales,
 And not the burthen that they bring.

XIV

If one should bring me this report,
 That thou hadst touch'd the land
 to-day,
 And I went down unto the quay,
 And found thee lying in the port ;

And standing, muffled round with woe,
 Should see thy passengers in rank
 Come stepping lightly down the
 plank,
 And beckoning unto those they know ;

And if along with these should come
 The man I held as half-divine ;
 Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
 And ask a thousand things of home ;

And I should tell him all my pain,
 And how my life had droop'd of late,
 And he should sorrow o'er my state
 And marvel what possess'd my brain ;

And I perceived no touch of change,
 No hint of death in all his frame,
 But found him all in all the same,
 I should not feel it to be strange.

XV

To-night the winds begin to rise
 And roar from yonder dropping day :
 The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
 The rooks are blown about the skies ;

The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,
 The cattle huddled on the lea ;
 And wildly dash'd on tower and tree
 The sunbeam strikes along the world :

And but for fancies, which aver
 That all thy motions gently pass
 Athwart a plane of molten glass,
 I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud ;
 And but for fear it is not so,
 The wild unrest that lives in woe
 Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
 And onward drags a labouring breast,
 And topples round the dreary west,
 A looming bastion fringed with fire.

XVI

What words are these have fall'n from me?
 Can calm despair and wild unrest
 Be tenants of a single breast,
 Or sorrow such a changeling be ?

Or doth she only seem to take
 The touch of change in calm or storm ;
 But knows no more of transient form
 In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark
 Hung in the shadow of a heaven ?
 Or has the shock, so harshly given,
 Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
 And staggers blindly ere she sink ?
 And stunn'd me from my power to
 think
 And all my knowledge of myself ;

And made me that delirious man
 Whose fancy fuses old and new,
 And flashes into false and true,
 And mingles all without a plan ?

XVII

Thou comest, much wept for : such a breeze
 Compell'd thy canvas, and my prayer
 Was as the whisper of an air
 To breathe thee over lonely seas.

For I in spirit saw thee move
 Thro' circles of the bounding sky,
 Week after week : the days go by :
 Come quick, thou bringest all I love.

Henceforth, wherever thou may'st roam,
 My blessing, like a line of light,
 Is on the waters day and night,
 And like a beacon guards thee home.

So may whatever tempest mars
 Mid-ocean, spare thee, sacred bark ;
 And balmy drops in summer dark
 Slide from the bosom of the stars.

So kind an office hath been done,
 Such precious relics brought by thee ;
 The dust of him I shall not see
 Till all my widow'd race be run.

XVIII

'Tis well ; 'tis something ; we may stand
 Where he in English earth is laid,
 And from his ashes may be made
 The violet of his native land.

'Tis little ; but it looks in truth
 As if the quiet bones were blest
 Among familiar names to rest
 And in the places of his youth.

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head
 That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep,
 And come, whatever loves to weep,
 And hear the ritual of the dead.

Ah yet, ev'n yet, if this might be,
 I, falling on his faithful heart,
 Would breathing thro' his lips impart
 The life that almost dies in me ;

That dies not, but endures with pain,
 And slowly forms the firmer mind,
 Treasuring the look it cannot find,
 The words that are not heard again.

XIX

The Danube to the Severn gave
 The darken'd heart that beat no
 more ;
 They laid him by the pleasant shore,
 And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills ;
 The salt sea-water passes by,
 And hushes half the babbling Wye,
 And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
 And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
 When fill'd with tears that cannot
 fall,
 I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
 Is vocal in its wooded walls ;
 My deeper anguish also falls,
 And I can speak a little then.

XX

The lesser griefs that may be said,
 That breathe a thousand tender
 vows,
 Are but as servants in a house
 Where lies the master newly dead ;

Who speak their feeling as it is,
 And weep the fulness from the
 mind :
 'It will be hard,' they say, 'to find
 Another service such as this.'

My lighter moods are like to these,
 That out of words a comfort win ;
 But there are other griefs within,
 And tears that at their fountain freeze ;

For by the hearth the children sit
 Cold in that atmosphere of Death,
 And scarce endure to draw the
 breath,
 Or like to noiseless phantoms flit :

But open converse is there none,
 So much the vital spirits sink
 To see the vacant chair, and think,
 'How good ! how kind ! and he is gone.'

XXI

I sing to him that rests below,
 And, since the grasses round me wave,
 I take the grasses of the grave,
 And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveller hears me now and then,
 And sometimes harshly will he speak :
 ' This fellow would make weakness
 weak,
 And melt the waxen hearts of men.'

Another answers, ' Let him be,
 He loves to make parade of pain,
 That with his piping he may gain
 The praise that comes to constancy.'

A third is wroth : ' Is this an hour
 For private sorrow's barren song,
 When more and more the people
 throng
 The chairs and thrones of civil power ?

' A time to sicken and to swoon,
 When Science reaches forth her arms
 To feel from world to world, and
 charms
 Her secret from the latest moon ?'

Behold, ye speak an idle thing :
 Ye never knew the sacred dust :
 I do but sing because I must,
 And pipe but as the linnets sing :

And one is glad ; her note is gay,
 For now her little ones have ranged ;
 And one is sad ; her note is changed,
 Because her brood is stol'n away.

XXII

The path by which we twain did go,
 Which led by tracts that pleased us
 well,
 Thro' four sweet years arose and fell,
 From flower to flower, from snow to snow :

And we with singing cheer'd the way,
 And, crown'd with all the season
 lent,
 From April on to April went,
 And glad at heart from May to May :

But where the path we walk'd began
 To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
 As we descended following Hope,
 There sat the Shadow fear'd of man ;

Who broke our fair companionship,
 And spread his mantle dark and
 cold,
 And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
 And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
 Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste,
 And think, that somewhere in the
 waste
 The Shadow sits and waits for me.

XXIII

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
 Or breaking into song by fits,
 Alone, alone, to where he sits,
 The Shadow cloak'd from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
 I wander, often falling lame,
 And looking back to whence I came,
 Or on to where the pathway leads ;

And crying, How changed from where it
 ran
 Thro' lands where not a leaf was
 dumb ;
 But all the lavish hills would hum
 The murmur of a happy Pan :

When each by turns was guide to each,
 And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
 And Thought leapt out to wed with
 Thought
 Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech ;

And all we met was fair and good,
 And all was good that Time could
 bring,
 And all the secret of the Spring
 Moved in the chambers of the blood ;

And many an old philosophy
 On Argive heights divinely sang,
 And round us all the thicket rang
 To many a flute of Arcady.

XXIV

And was the day of my delight
 As pure and perfect as I say ?
 The very source and fount of Day
 Is dash'd with wandering isles of night.

If all was good and fair we met,
 This earth had been the Paradise
 It never look'd to human eyes
 Since our first Sun arose and set.

And is it that the haze of grief
 Makes former gladness loom so
 great ?
 The lowness of the present state,
 That sets the past in this relief ?

Or that the past will always win
 A glory from its being far ;
 And orb into the perfect star
 We saw not, when we moved therein ?

XXV

I know that this was Life,—the track
 Whereon with equal feet we fared ;
 And then, as now, the day prepared
 The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move
 As light as carrier-birds in air ;
 I loved the weight I had to bear,
 Because it needed help of Love :

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
 When mighty Love would cleave in
 twain
 The lading of a single pain,
 And part it, giving half to him.

XXVI

Still onward winds the dreary way ;
 I with it ; for I long to prove
 No lapse of moons can canker Love,
 Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
 And goodness, and hath power to
 see
 Within the green the moulder'd tree,
 And towers fall'n as soon as built—

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee
 Or see (in Him is no before)
 In more of life true life no more
 And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
 Breaks hither over Indian seas,
 That Shadow waiting with the
 keys,
 To shroud me from my proper scorn.

XXVII

I envy not in any moods
 The captive void of noble rage,
 The linnet born within the cage,
 That never knew the summer woods :

I envy not the beast that takes
 His license in the field of time,
 Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
 To whom a conscience never wakes ;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
 The heart that never plighted troth
 But stagnates in the weeds of sloth ;
 Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall ;
 I feel it, when I sorrow most ;
 'Tis better to have loved and lost
 Than never to have loved at all.

XXVIII

The time draws near the birth of Christ :
 The moon is hid ; the night is still ;
 The Christmas bells from hill to hill
 Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
 From far and near, on mead and
 moor,
 Swell out and fail, as if a door
 Were shut between me and the sound :

Each voice four changes on the wind,
 That now dilate, and now decrease,
 Peace and goodwill, goodwill and
 peace,
 Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
 I almost wish'd no more to wake,
 And that my hold on life would break
 Before I heard those bells again :

But they my troubled spirit rule,
 For they controll'd me when a boy ;
 They bring me sorrow touch'd with
 joy,
 The merry merry bells of Yule.

XXIX

With such compelling cause to grieve
 As daily vexes household peace,
 And chains regret to his decease,
 How dare we keep our Christmas-eve ;

Which brings no more a welcome guest
 To enrich the threshold of the night
 With shower'd largess of delight
 In dance and song and game and jest ?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
 Entwine the cold baptismal font,
 Make one wreath more for Use and
 Wont,
 That guard the portals of the house ;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
 Gray nurses, loving nothing new ;
 Why should they miss their yearly
 due
 Before their time ? They too will die.

XXX

With trembling fingers did we weave
 The holly round the Christmas
 hearth ;
 A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
 And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
 We gambol'd, making vain pretence
 Of gladness, with an awful sense
 Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech :
 We heard them sweep the winter
 land ;
 And in a circle hand-in-hand
 Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang ;
 We sung, tho' every eye was dim,
 A merry song we sang with him
 Last year : impetuously we sang :

We ceased : a gentler feeling crept
 Upon us : surely rest is meet :
 ' They rest,' we said, ' their sleep is
 sweet,'
 And silence follow'd, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range ;
 Once more we sang : ' They do not
 die
 Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
 Nor change to us, although they change ;

' Rapt from the fickle and the frail
 With gather'd power, yet the same,
 Pierces the keen seraphic flame
 From orb to orb, from veil to veil.'

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
 Draw forth the cheerful day from
 night :
 O Father, touch the east, and light
 The light that shone when Hope was
 born.

XXXI

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,
 And home to Mary's house return'd,
 Was this demanded—if he yearn'd
 To hear her weeping by his grave ?

' Where wert thou, brother, those four
 days ?'
 There lives no record of reply,
 Which telling what it is to die
 Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,
 The streets were fill'd with joyful
 sound,
 A solemn gladness even crown'd
 The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ !
 The rest remaineth unreveal'd ;
 He told it not ; or something seal'd
 The lips of that Evangelist.

XXXII

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
 Nor other thought her mind admits
 But, he was dead, and there he sits,
 And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
 All other, when her ardent gaze
 Roves from the living brother's face,
 And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
 Borne down by gladness so complete,
 She bows, she bathes the Saviour's
 feet
 With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful
 prayers,
 Whose loves in higher love endure ;
 What souls possess themselves so
 pure,
 Or is there blessedness like theirs ?

XXXIII

O thou that after toil and storm
 Mayst seem to have reach'd a purer
 air,
 Whose faith has centre everywhere,
 Nor cares to fix itself to form,
 Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
 Her early Heaven, her happy views ;
 Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
 A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith thro' form is pure as thine,
 Her hands are quicker unto good :
 Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood
 To which she links a truth divine !

See thou, that countest reason ripe
 In holding by the law within,
 Thou fail not in a world of sin,
 And ev'n for want of such a type.

XXXIV

My own dim life should teach me this,
 That life shall live for evermore,
 Else earth is darkness at the core,
 And dust and ashes all that is ;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
 Fantastic beauty ; such as lurks
 In some wild Poet, when he works
 Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I ?
 'Twere hardly worth my while to
 choose
 Of things all mortal, or to use
 A little patience ere I die ;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
 Like birds the charming serpent
 draws,
 To drop head-foremost in the jaws
 Of vacant darkness and to cease.

XXXV

Yet if some voice that man could trust
 Should murmur from the narrow
 house,
 'The cheeks drop in ; the body bows ;
 Man dies : nor is there hope in dust :'

Might I not say ? 'Yet even here,
 But for one hour, O Love, I strive
 To keep so sweet a thing alive :'
 But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
 The sound of streams that swift or
 slow
 Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
 The dust of continents to be ;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
 'The sound of that forgetful shore
 Will change my sweetness more and
 more,
 Half-dead to know that I shall die.'

O me, what profits it to put
 An idle case ? If Death were seen
 At first as Death, Love had not been,
 Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
 Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape
 Had bruised the herb and crush'd
 the grape,
 And bask'd and batten'd in the woods.

XXXVI

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
 Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
 We yield all blessing to the name
 Of Him that made them current coin ;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
 Where truth in closest words shall
 fail,
 When truth embodied in a tale
 Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and
 wrought
 With human hands the creed of
 creeds

In loveliness of perfect deeds,
 More strong than all poetic thought ;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
 Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
 And those wild eyes that watch the
 wave

In roarings round the coral reef.

XXXVII

Urania speaks with darken'd brow :
 'Thou pratest here where thou art
 least ;

This faith has many a purer priest,
 And many an abler voice than thou.

'Go down beside thy native rill,
 On thy Parnassus set thy feet,
 And hear thy laurel whisper sweet
 About the ledges of the hill.'

And my Melpomene replies,
 A touch of shame upon her cheek :

'I am not worthy ev'n to speak
 Of thy prevailing mysteries ;

'For I am but an earthly Muse,
 And owning but a little art
 To lull with song an aching heart,
 And render human love his dues ;

'But brooding on the dear one dead,
 And all he said of things divine,
 (And dear to me as sacred wine
 To dying lips is all he said),

T

'I murmur'd, as I came along,
 Of comfort clasp'd in truth reveal'd ;
 And loiter'd in the master's field,
 And darken'd sanctities with song.'

XXXVIII

With weary steps I loiter on,
 Tho' always under alter'd skies
 The purple from the distance dies,
 My prospect and horizon gone.

No joy the blowing season gives,
 The herald melodies of spring,
 But in the songs I love to sing
 A doubtful gleam of solace lives.

If any care for what is here
 Survive in spirits render'd free,
 Then are these songs I sing of thee
 Not all ungrateful to thine ear.

XXXIX

Old warder of these buried bones,
 And answering now my random
 stroke

With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
 Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest toward the dreamless head,
 To thee too comes the golden hour
 When flower is feeling after flower ;
 But Sorrow—fixt upon the dead,

And darkening the dark graves of men,—
 What whisper'd from her lying lips?
 Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,
 And passes into gloom again.

XL

Could we forget the widow'd hour
 And look on Spirits breathed away,
 As on a maiden in the day
 When first she wears her orange-flower !

When crown'd with blessing she doth
 rise
 To take her latest leave of home,
 And hopes and light regrets that
 come
 Make April of her tender eyes ;

S

And doubtful joys the father move,
 And tears are on the mother's face,
 As parting with a long embrace
 She enters other realms of love ;

Her office there to rear, to teach,
 Becoming as is meet and fit
 A link among the days, to knit
 The generations each with each ;

And, doubtless, unto thee is given
 A life that bears immortal fruit
 In those great offices that suit
 The full-grown energies of heaven.

Ay me, the difference I discern !
 How often shall her old fireside
 Be cheer'd with tidings of the bride,
 How often she herself return,

And tell them all they would have told,
 And bring her babe, and make her
 boast,
 Till even those that miss'd her most
 Shall count new things as dear as old :

But thou and I have shaken hands,
 Till growing winters lay me low ;
 My paths are in the fields I know,
 And thine in undiscover'd lands.

XLI

Thy spirit ere our fatal loss
 Did ever rise from high to higher ;
 As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,
 As flies the lighter thro' the gross.

But thou art turn'd to something strange,
 And I have lost the links that bound
 Thy changes ; here upon the ground,
 No more partaker of thy change.

Deep folly ! yet that this could be—
 That I could wing my will with
 might
 To leap the grades of life and light,
 And flash at once, my friend, to thee.

For tho' my nature rarely yields
 To that vague fear implied in death ;
 Nor shudders at the gulfs beneath,
 The howlings from forgotten fields ;

Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor
 An inner trouble I behold,
 A spectral doubt which makes me
 cold,
 That I shall be thy mate no more,
 Tho' following with an upward mind
 The wonders that have come to
 thee,
 Thro' all the secular to-be,
 But evermore a life behind.

XLII

I vex my heart with fancies dim :
 He still outstript me in the race ;
 It was but unity of place
 That made me dream I rank'd with him.

And so may Place retain us still,
 And he the much-beloved again,
 A lord of large experience, train
 To riper growth the mind and will :

And what delights can equal those
 That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
 When one that loves but knows not,
 reaps
 A truth from one that loves and knows ?

XLIII

If Sleep and Death be truly one,
 And every spirit's folded bloom
 Thro' all its intervital gloom
 In some long trance should slumber on ;

Unconscious of the sliding hour,
 Bare of the body, might it last,
 And silent traces of the past
 Be all the colour of the flower :

So then were nothing lost to man ;
 So that still garden of the souls
 In many a figured leaf enrolls
 The total world since life began ;

And love will last as pure and whole
 As when he loved me here in
 Time,
 And at the spiritual prime
 Rewaken with the dawning soul.

XLIV

How fares it with the happy dead?
 For here the man is more and more;
 But he forgets the days before
 God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanish'd, tone and tint,
 And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
 Gives out at times (he knows not
 whence)

A little flash, a mystic hint;

And in the long harmonious years
 (If Death so taste Lethean springs),
 May some dim touch of earthly
 things

Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,
 O turn thee round, resolve the doubt;
 My guardian angel will speak out
 In that high place, and tell thee all.

XLV

The baby new to earth and sky,
 What time his tender palm is prest
 Against the circle of the breast,
 Has never thought that 'this is I':

But as he grows he gathers much,
 And learns the use of 'I,' and 'me,'
 And finds 'I am not what I see,
 And other than the things I touch.'

So rounds he to a separate mind
 From whence clear memory may
 begin,

As thro' the frame that binds him in
 His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,
 Which else were fruitless of their due,
 Had man to learn himself anew
 Beyond the second birth of Death.

XLVI

We ranging down this lower track,
 The path we came by, thorn and
 flower,
 Is shadow'd by the growing hour,
 Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last
 In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
 But clear from marge to marge shall
 bloom

The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time reveal'd;
 The fruitful hours of still increase;
 Days order'd in a wealthy peace,
 And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,
 A bounded field, nor stretching far;
 Look also, Love, a brooding star,
 A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

XLVII

That each, who seems a separate whole,
 Should move his rounds, and fusing
 all
 The skirts of self again, should fall
 Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
 Eternal form shall still divide
 The eternal soul from all beside;
 And I shall know him when we meet:

And we shall sit at endless feast,
 Enjoying each the other's good:
 What vaster dream can hit the mood
 Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
 Before the spirits fade away,
 Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
 'Farewell! We lose ourselves in light.'

XLVIII

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
 Were taken to be such as closed
 Grave doubts and answers here pro-
 posed,
 Then these were such as men might scorn:

Her care is not to part and prove;
 She takes, when harsher moods
 remit,
 What slender shade of doubt may
 flit,
 And makes it vassal unto love:

And hence, indeed, she sports with
words,
But better serves a wholesome law,
And holds it sin and shame to draw
The deepest measure from the chords :

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
But rather loosens from the lip
Shortswallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

XLIX

From art, from nature, from the schools,
Let random influences glance,
Like light in many a shiver'd lance
That breaks about the dappled pools :

The lightest wave of thought shall lisp,
The fancy's tenderest eddy wreath,
The slightest air of song shall breathe
To make the sullen surface crisp.

And look thy look, and go thy way,
But blame not thou the winds that
make

The seeming-wanton ripple break,
The tender-pencil'd shadow play.

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears
Ay me, the sorrow deepens down,
Whose muffled motions blindly drown
The bases of my life in tears.

L

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the
nerves prick
And tingle ; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer
trust ;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and
sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

LI

Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eye some hidden
shame
And I be lessen'd in his love?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue :
Shall love be blamed for want of
faith?
There must be wisdom with great
Death :
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall :
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.

LII

I cannot love thee as I ought,
For love reflects the thing beloved ;
My words are only words, and moved
Upon the topmost froth of thought.

'Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,'
The Spirit of true love replied ;
'Thou canst not move me from thy
side,

Nor human frailty do me wrong.

'What keeps a spirit wholly true
To that ideal which he bears?
What record? not the sinless years
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue :

'So fret not, like an idle girl,
That life is dash'd with flecks of sin.
Abide : thy wealth is gather'd in,
When Time hath sunder'd shell from
pearl.'

LIII

How many a father have I seen,
 A sober man, among his boys,
 Whose youth was full of foolish
 noise,
 Who wears his manhood hale and green :
 And dare we to this fancy give,
 That had the wild oat not been
 sown,
 The soil, left barren, scarce had
 grown
 The grain by which a man may live?
 Or, if we held the doctrine sound
 For life outliving heats of youth,
 Yet who would preach it as a truth
 To those that eddy round and round?
 Hold thou the good : define it well :
 For fear divine Philosophy
 Should push beyond her mark, and
 be
 Procuress to the Lords of Hell.

LIV

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of will,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;
 That nothing walks with aimless feet ;
 That not one life shall be destroy'd,
 Or cast as rubbish to the void,
 When God hath made the pile complete ;
 That not a worm is cloven in vain ;
 That not a moth with vain desire
 Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
 Or but subserves another's gain.
 Behold, we know not anything ;
 I can but trust that good shall fall
 At last—far off—at last, to all,
 And every winter change to spring.
 So runs my dream : but what am I ?
 An infant crying in the night :
 An infant crying for the light :
 And with no language but a cry.

LV

The wish, that of the living whole
 No life may fail beyond the grave,
 Derives it not from what we have
 The likest God within the soul?
 Are God and Nature then at strife,
 That Nature lends such evil dreams?
 So careful of the type she seems,
 So careless of the single life ;
 That I, considering everywhere
 Her secret meaning in her deeds,
 And finding that of fifty seeds
 She often brings but one to bear,
 I falter where I firmly trod,
 And falling with my weight of cares
 Upon the great world's altar-stairs
 That slope thro' darkness up to God,
 I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
 And gather dust and chaff, and call
 To what I feel is Lord of all,
 And faintly trust the larger hope.

LVI

'So careful of the type?' but no.
 From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone
 She cries, 'A thousand types are gone :
 I care for nothing, all shall go.
 'Thou makest thine appeal to me :
 I bring to life, I bring to death :
 The spirit does but mean the breath :
 I know no more.' And he, shall he,
 Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
 Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
 Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
 Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,
 Who trusted God was love indeed
 And love Creation's final law—
 Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
 With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—
 Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
 Who battled for the True, the Just,
 Be blown about the desert dust,
 Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail !
O for thy voice to soothe and bless !
What hope of answer, or redress ?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

LVII

Peace ; come away : the song of woe
Is after all an earthly song :
Peace ; come away : we do him
wrong
To sing so wildly : let us go.

Come ; let us go : your cheeks are pale ;
But half my life I leave behind :
Methinks my friend is richly shrined ;
But I shall pass ; my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead ;
And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,
'Adieu, adieu' for evermore.

LVIII

In those sad words I took farewell :
Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
As drop by drop the water falls
In vaults and catacombs, they fell ;

And, falling, idly broke the peace
Of hearts that beat from day to
day,
Half-conscious of their dying clay,
And those cold crypts where they shall
cease.

The high Muse answer'd : 'Wherefore
grieve
Thy brethren with a fruitless tear ?
Abide a little longer here,
And thou shalt take a nobler leave.'

LIX

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
No casual mistress, but a wife,
My bosom-friend and half of life ;
As I confess it needs must be ;

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
And put thy harsher moods aside,
If thou wilt have me wise and good.

My centred passion cannot move,
Nor will it lessen from to-day ;
But I'll have leave at times to play
As with the creature of my love ;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,
With so much hope for years to come,
That, howsoe'er I know thee, some
Could hardly tell what name were thine.

LX

He past ; a soul of nobler tone :
My spirit loved and loves him yet,
Like some poor girl whose heart is
set

On one whose rank exceeds her own.

He mixing with his proper sphere,
She finds the baseness of her lot,
Half jealous of she knows not what,
And envying all that meet him there.

The little village looks forlorn ;
She sighs amid her narrow days,
Moving about the household ways,
In that dark house where she was born.

The foolish neighbours come and go,
And tease her till the day draws by :
At night she weeps, 'How vain
am I !
How should he love a thing so low ?'

LXI

If, in thy second state sublime,
Thy ransom'd reason change replies
With all the circle of the wise,
The perfect flower of human time ;

And if thou cast thine eyes below,
 How dimly character'd and slight,
 How dwarf'd a growth of cold and
 night,
 How blanch'd with darkness must I grow !

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,
 Where thy first form was made a man ;
 I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
 The soul of Shakspeare love thee more.

LXII

Tho' if an eye that's downward cast
 Could make thee somewhat blench
 or fail,
 Then be my love an idle tale,
 And fading legend of the past ;

And thou, as one that once declined,
 When he was little more than boy,
 On some unworthy heart with joy,
 But lives to wed an equal mind ;

And breathes a novel world, the while
 His other passion wholly dies,
 Or in the light of deeper eyes
 Is matter for a flying smile.

LXIII

Yet pity for a horse o'er-driven,
 And love in which my hound has
 part,
 Can hang no weight upon my heart
 In its assumptions up to heaven ;

And I am so much more than these,
 As thou, perchance, art more than I,
 And yet I spare them sympathy,
 And I would set their pains at ease.

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,
 As, unto vaster motions bound,
 The circuits of thine orbit round
 A higher height, a deeper deep.

LXIV

Dost thou look back on what hath been,
 As some divinely gifted man,
 Whose life in low estate began
 And on a simple village green ;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
 And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
 And breasts the blows of circum-
 stance,
 And grapples with his evil star ;

Who makes by force his merit known
 And lives to clutch the golden keys,
 To mould a mighty state's decrees,
 And shape the whisper of the throne ;

And moving up from high to higher,
 Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
 The pillar of a people's hope,
 The centre of a world's desire ;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
 When all his active powers are still,
 A distant dearness in the hill,
 A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
 While yet beside its vocal springs
 He play'd at counsellors and kings,
 With one that was his earliest mate ;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea
 And reaps the labour of his hands,
 Or in the furrow musing stands ;
 'Does my old friend remember me ?'

LXV

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt ;
 I lull a fancy trouble-tost
 With 'Love's too precious to be lost,
 A little grain shall not be spilt.'

And in that solace can I sing,
 Till out of painful phases wrought
 There flutters up a happy thought,
 Self-balanced on a lightsome wing :

Since we deserved the name of friends,
 And thine effect so lives in me,
 A part of mine may live in thee
 And move thee on to noble ends.

LXVI

You thought my heart too far diseased ;
 You wonder when my fancies play
 To find me gay among the gay,
 Like one with any trifle pleased.

The shade by which my life was crost,
Which makes a desert in the mind,
Has made me kindly with my kind,
And like to him whose sight is lost ;

Whose feet are guided thro' the land,
Whose jest among his friends is free,
Who takes the children on his knee,
And winds their curls about his hand :

He plays with threads, he beats his chair
For pastime, dreaming of the sky ;
His inner day can never die,
His night of loss is always there.

LXVII

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water of the west,
There comes a glory on the walls :

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away ;
From off my bed the moonlight dies ;
And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipt in gray :

And then I know the mist is drawn
A lucid veil from coast to coast,
And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

LXVIII

When in the down I sink my head,
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times
my breath ;
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows
not Death,
Nor can I dream of thee as dead :

I walk as ere I walk'd forlorn,
When all our path was fresh with
dew,
And all the bugle breezes blew
Reveillée to the breaking morn.

But what is this? I turn about,
I find a trouble in thine eye,
Which makes me sad I know not why,
Nor can my dream resolve the doubt :

But ere the lark hath left the lea
I wake, and I discern the truth ;
It is the trouble of my youth
That foolish sleep transfers to thee.

LXIX

I dream'd there would be Spring no more,
That Nature's ancient power was
lost :

The streets were black with smoke
and frost,
They chatter'd trifles at the door :

I wander'd from the noisy town,
I found a wood with thorny boughs :
I took the thorns to bind my brows,
I wore them like a civic crown :

I met with scoffs, I met with scorns
From youth and babe and hoary
hairs :
They call'd me in the public squares
The fool that wears a crown of thorns :

They call'd me fool, they call'd me child :
I found an angel of the night ;
The voice was low, the look was
bright ;
He look'd upon my crown and smiled :

He reach'd the glory of a hand,
That seem'd to touch it into leaf :
The voice was not the voice of grief,
The words were hard to understand.

LXX

I cannot see the features right,
When on the gloom I strive to paint
The face I know ; the hues are faint
And mix with hollow masks of night ;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
A hand that points, and palled shapes
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought ;

And crowds that stream from yawning
 doors,
 And shoals of pucker'd faces drive ;
 Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
 And lazy lengths on boundless shores ;

Till all at once beyond the will
 I hear a wizard music roll,
 And thro' a lattice on the soul
 Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

LXXI

Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance
 And madness, thou hast forged at last
 A night-long Present of the Past
 In which we went thro' summer France.

Hadst thou such credit with the soul ?
 Then bring an opiate trebly strong,
 Drug down the blindfold sense of
 wrong
 That so my pleasure may be whole ;

While now we talk as once we talk'd
 Of men and minds, the dust of change,
 The days that grow to something
 strange,
 In walking as of old we walk'd

Beside the river's wooded reach,
 The fortress, and the mountain ridge,
 The cataract flashing from the bridge,
 The breaker breaking on the beach.

LXXII

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
 And howlest, issuing out of night,
 With blasts that blow the poplar
 white,
 And lash with storm the streaming pane ?

Day, when my crown'd estate begun
 To pine in that reverse of doom,
 Which sicken'd every living bloom,
 And blurr'd the splendour of the sun ;

Who usherest in the dolorous hour
 With thy quick tears that make the
 rose
 Pull sideways, and the daisy close
 Her crimson fringes to the shower ;

Whom might'st have heaved a windless flame
 Up the deep East, or, whispering,
 play'd
 A chequer-work of beam and shade
 Along the hills, yet look'd the same.

As wan, as chill, as wild as now ;
 Day, mark'd as with some hideous
 crime,
 When the dark hand struck down
 thro' time,
 And cancell'd nature's best : but thou,

Lift as thou may'st thy burthen'd brows
 Thro' clouds that drench the morning
 star,
 And whirl the ungarner'd sheaf afar,
 And sow the sky with flying boughs,

And up thy vault with roaring sound
 Climb thy thick noon, disastrous day ;
 Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,
 And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

LXXIII

So many worlds, so much to do,
 So little done, such things to be,
 How know I what had need of thee,
 For thou wert strong as thou wert true ?

The fame is quench'd that I foresaw,
 The head hath miss'd an earthly
 wreath :
 I curse not nature, no, nor death ;
 For nothing is that errs from law.

We pass ; the path that each man trod
 Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds :
 What fame is left for human deeds
 In endless age ? It rests with God.

O hollow wraith of dying fame,
 Fade wholly, while the soul exults,
 And self-infolds the large results
 Of force that would have forged a name.

LXXIV

As sometimes in a dead man's face,
 To those that watch it more and more,
 A likeness, hardly seen before,
 Comes out—to some one of his race :

So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
 I see thee what thou art, and know
 Thy likeness to the wise below,
 Thy kindred with the great of old.

But there is more than I can see,
 And what I see I leave unsaid,
 Nor speak it, knowing Death has
 made
 His darkness beautiful with thee.

LXXV

I leave thy praises unexpress'd
 In verse that brings myself relief,
 And by the measure of my grief
 I leave thy greatness to be guess'd ;

What practice howsoe'er expert
 In fitting aptest words to things,
 Or voice the richest-toned that sings,
 Hath power to give thee as thou wert ?

I care not in these fading days
 To raise a cry that lasts not long,
 And round thee with the breeze of
 song
 To stir a little dust of praise.

Thy leaf has perish'd in the green,
 And, while we breathe beneath the
 sun,
 The world which credits what is done
 Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame ;
 But somewhere, out of human view,
 Whate'er thy hands are set to do
 Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

LXXVI

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
 And in a moment set thy face
 Where all the starry heavens of
 space
 Are sharpen'd to a needle's end ;

Take wings of foresight ; lighten thro'
 The secular abyss to come,
 And lo, thy deepest lays are dumb
 Before the mouldering of a yew ;

And if the matin songs, that woke
 The darkness of our planet, last,
 Thine own shall wither in the vast,
 Ere half the lifetime of an oak.

Ere these have clothed their branchy
 bowers
 With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain ;
 And what are they when these remain
 The ruin'd shells of hollow towers ?

LXXVII

What hope is here for modern rhyme
 To him, who turns a musing eye
 On songs, and deeds, and lives, that
 lie
 Foreshorten'd in the tract of time ?

These mortal lullabies of pain
 May bind a book, may line a box,
 May serve to curl a maiden's locks,
 Or when a thousand moons shall wane

A man upon a stall may find,
 And, passing, turn the page that tells
 A grief, then changed to something
 else,
 Sung by a long-forgotten mind.

But what of that ? My darken'd ways
 Shall ring with music all the same ;
 To breathe my loss is more than fame,
 To utter love more sweet than praise.

LXXVIII

Again at Christmas did we weave
 The holly round the Christmas
 hearth ;
 The silent snow possess'd the earth,
 And calmly fell our Christmas-eve :

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,
 No wing of wind the region swept,
 But over all things brooding slept
 The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
 Again our ancient games had place,
 The mimic picture's breathing grace,
 And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

Who show'd a token of distress?
 No single tear, no mark of pain :
 O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
 O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die !
 No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
 Her deep relations are the same,
 But with long use her tears are dry.

LXXIX

' More than my brothers are to me, '—
 Let this not vex thee, noble heart !
 I know thee of what force thou art
 To hold the costliest love in fee.

But thou and I are one in kind,
 As moulded like in Nature's mint ;
 And hill and wood and field did print
 The same sweet forms in either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curl'd
 Thro' all his eddying coves ; the same
 All winds that roam the twilight came
 In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffer'd vows,
 One lesson from one book we learn'd,
 Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turn'd
 To black and brown on kindred brows.

And so my wealth resembles thine,
 But he was rich where I was poor,
 And he supplied my want the more
 As his unlikeness fitted mine.

LXXX

If any vague desire should rise,
 That holy Death ere Arthur died
 Had moved me kindly from his side,
 And dropt the dust on tearless eyes ;

Then fancy shapes, as fancy can,
 The grief my loss in him had wrought,
 A grief as deep as life or thought,
 But stay'd in peace with God and man.

I make a picture in the brain ;
 I hear the sentence that he speaks ;
 He bears the burthen of the weeks
 But turns his burthen into gain.

His credit thus shall set me free ;
 And, influence-rich to soothe and
 save,
 Unused example from the grave
 Reach out dead hands to comfort me.

LXXXI

Could I have said while he was here,
 ' My love shall now no further range ;
 There cannot come a mellower
 change,

For now is love mature in ear ' !

Love, then, had hope of richer store :
 What end is here to my complaint ?
 This haunting whisper makes me
 faint,
 ' More years had made me love thee more.'

But Death returns an answer sweet :
 ' My sudden frost was sudden gain,
 And gave all ripeness to the grain,
 It might have drawn from after-heat.'

LXXXII

I wage not any feud with Death
 For changes wrought on form and
 face ;
 No lower life that earth's embrace
 May breed with him, can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
 From state to state the spirit walks ;
 And these are but the shatter'd stalks,
 Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
 The use of virtue out of earth :
 I know transplanted human worth
 Will bloom to profit, elsewhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak
 The wrath that garners in my heart ;
 He put our lives so far apart
 We cannot hear each other speak.

LXXXIII

Dip down upon the northern shore,
 O sweet new-year delaying long ;
 Thou doest expectant nature wrong ;
 Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
 Thy sweetness from its proper place?
 Can trouble live with April days,
 Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
 The little speedwell's darling blue,
 Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
 Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,
 Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
 That longs to burst a frozen bud
 And flood a fresher throat with song.

LXXXIV

When I contemplate all alone
 The life that had been thine below,
 And fix my thoughts on all the glow
 To which thy crescent would have grown;

I see thee sitting crown'd with good,
 A central warmth diffusing bliss —
 In glance and smile, and clasp and
 kiss,

On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;
 For now the day was drawing on,
 When thou should'st link thy life
 with one

Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled 'Uncle' on my knee;
 But that remorseless iron hour
 Made cypress of her orange flower,
 Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,
 Toclaptheir cheeks, to call them mine.
 I see their unborn faces shine
 Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honour'd guest,
 Thy partner in the flowery walk
 Of letters, genial table-talk,
 Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labour fills
 The lips of men with honest praise,
 And sun by sun the happy days
 Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair;
 And all the train of bounteous hours
 Conduct by paths of growing powers,
 To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
 Her lavish mission richly wrought,
 Leaving great legacies of thought,
 Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,
 As link'd with thine in love and fate,
 And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
 To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,
 And He that died in Holy Land
 Would reach us out the shining hand,
 And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant?
 Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
 The old bitterness again, and break
 The low beginnings of content.

LXXXV

This truth came borne with bier and pall,
 I felt it, when I sorrow'd most,
 'Tis better to have loved and lost,
 Than never to have loved at all——

O true in word, and tried in deed,
 Demanding, so to bring relief
 To this which is our common grief,
 What kind of life is that I lead;

And whether trust in things above
 Be dimm'd of sorrow, or sustain'd;
 And whether love for him have
 drain'd
 My capabilities of love;

Your words have virtue such as draws
 A faithful answer from the breast,
 Thro' light reproaches, half exprest,
 And loyal unto kindly laws.

My blood an even tenor kept,
 Till on mine ear this message falls,
 That in Vienna's fatal walls
 God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair
 That range above our mortal state,
 In circle round the blessed gate,
 Received and gave him welcome there ;

And led him thro' the blissful climes,
 And show'd him in the fountain fresh
 All knowledge that the sons of flesh
 Shall gather in the cycled times.

But I remain'd, whose hopes were dim,
 Whose life, whose thoughts were little
 worth,
 To wander on a darken'd earth,
 Where all things round me breathed of
 him.

O friendship, equal-poised control,
 O heart, with kindest motion warm,
 O sacred essence, other form,
 O solemn ghost, O crowned soul !

Yet none could better know than I,
 How much of act at human hands
 The sense of human will demands
 By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,
 I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
 His being working in mine own,
 The footsteps of his life in mine ;

A life that all the Muses deck'd
 With gifts of grace, that might ex-
 press
 All-comprehensive tenderness,
 All-subtilising intellect :

And so my passion hath not swerved
 To works of weakness, but I find
 An image comforting the mind,
 And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,
 That loved to handle spiritual strife,
 Diffused the shock thro' all my life,
 But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again
 For other friends that once I met ;
 Nor can it suit me to forget
 The mighty hopes that make us men.

I woo your love : I count it crime
 To mourn for any overmuch ;
 I, the divided half of such
 A friendship as had master'd Time ;

Which masters Time indeed, and is
 Eternal, separate from fears :
 The all-assuming months and years
 Can take no part away from this :

But Summer on the steaming floods,
 And Spring that swells the narrow
 brooks,
 And Autumn, with a noise of rooks,
 That gather in the waning woods,

And every pulse of wind and wave
 Recalls, in change of light or gloom,
 My old affection of the tomb,
 And my prime passion in the grave :

My old affection of the tomb,
 A part of stillness, yearns to speak :
 ' Arise, and get thee forth and seek
 A friendship for the years to come.

' I watch thee from the quiet shore ;
 Thy spirit up to mine can reach ;
 But in dear words of human speech
 We two communicate no more.'

And I, ' Can clouds of nature stain
 The starry clearness of the free?
 How is it? Canst thou feel for me
 Some painless sympathy with pain?'

And lightly does the whisper fall ;
 ' 'Tis hard for thee to fathom this ;
 I triumph in conclusive bliss,
 And that serene result of all.'

So hold I commerce with the dead ;
 Or so methinks the dead would
 say ;
 Or so shall grief with symbols play
 And pining life be fancy-fed.

Now looking to some settled end,
 That these things pass, and I shall
 prove
 A meetingsomewhere, love with love,
 I crave your pardon, O my friend ;

If not so fresh, with love as true,
 I, clasping brother-hands, aver
 I could not, if I would, transfer
 The whole I felt for him to you.

For which be they that hold apart
 The promise of the golden hours?
 First love, first friendship, equal
 powers,
 That marry with the virgin heart.

Still mine, that cannot but deplore,
 That beats within a lonely place,
 That yet remembers his embrace,
 But at his footstep leaps no more,

My heart, tho' widow'd, may not rest
 Quite in the love of what is gone,
 But seeks to beat in time with one
 That warms another living breast.

Ah, take the imperfect gift I bring,
 Knowing the primrose yet is dear,
 The primrose of the later year,
 As not unlike to that of Spring.

LXXXVI

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
 That rollst from the gorgeous
 gloom
 Of evening over brake and bloom
 And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
 Thro' all the dewy-tassell'd wood,
 And shadowing down the horned
 flood
 In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
 The full new life that feeds thy
 breath
 Throughout my frame, till Doubt
 and Death,
 Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
 On leagues of odour streaming far,
 To where in yonder orient star
 A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'

LXXXVII

I past beside the reverend walls
 In which of old I wore the gown;
 I roved at random thro' the town,
 And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes
 The storm their high-built organs
 make,
 And thunder-music, rolling, shake
 The prophet blazon'd on the panes;

And caught once more the distant shout,
 The measured pulse of racing oars
 Among the willows; paced the shores
 And many a bridge, and all about

The same gray flats again, and felt
 The same, but not the same; and
 last

Up that long walk of limes I past
 To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door:
 I linger'd; all within was noise
 Of songs, and clapping hands, and
 boys
 That crash'd the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band
 Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
 And labour, and the changing mart,
 And all the framework of the land;

When one would aim an arrow fair,
 But send it slackly from the string;
 And one would pierce an outer ring,
 And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master-bowman, he,
 Would cleave the mark. A willing
 ear
 We lent him. Who, but hung to
 hear

The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point, with power and
 grace
 And music in the bounds of law,
 To those conclusions when we saw
 The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
 In azure orbits heavenly-wise ;
 And over those ethereal eyes
 The bar of Michael Angelo.

LXXXVIII

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
 Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,
 O tell me where the senses mix,
 O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate : fierce extremes employ
 Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,
 And in the midmost heart of grief
 Thy passion clasps a secret joy :

And I—my harp would prelude woe—
 I cannot all command the strings ;
 The glory of the sum of things
 Will flash along the chords and go.

LXXXIX

Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
 Of this flat lawn with dusk and
 bright ;
 And thou, with all thy breadth and
 height
 Of foliage, towering sycamore ;

How often, hither wandering down,
 My Arthur found your shadows fair,
 And shook to all the liberal air
 The dust and din and steam of town :

He brought an eye for all he saw ;
 He mixt in all our simple sports ;
 They pleased him, fresh from brawl-
 ing courts
 And dusty purlieus of the law.

O joy to him in this retreat,
 Immantled in ambrosial dark,
 To drink the cooler air, and mark
 The landscape winking thro' the heat :

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
 The sweep of scythe in morning
 dew,
 The gust that round the garden flew,
 And tumbled half the mellowing pears !

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
 About him, heart and ear were fed
 To hear him, as he lay and read
 The Tuscan poets on the lawn :

Or in the all-golden afternoon
 A guest, or happy sister, sung,
 Or here she brought the harp and
 flung
 A ballad to the brightening moon :

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,
 Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
 And break the livelong summer day
 With banquet in the distant woods ;

Whereat we glanced from theme to
 theme,
 Discuss'd the books to love or hate,
 Or touch'd the changes of the state,
 Or threaded some Socratic dream ;

But if I praised the busy town,
 He loved to rail against it still,
 For 'ground in yonder social mill
 We rub each other's angles down,

'And merge' he said 'in form and
 gloss
 The picturesque of man and man.'
 We talk'd : the stream beneath us
 ran,
 The wine-flask lying couch'd in moss,

Or cool'd within the glooming wave ;
 And last, returning from afar,
 Before the crimson-circled star
 Had fall'n into her father's grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
 We heard behind the woodbine veil
 The milk that bubbled in the pail,
 And buzzings of the honied hours.

XC

He tasted love with half his mind,
 Nor ever drank the inviolate spring
 Where nighest heaven, who first
 could fling
 This bitter seed among mankind ;

That could the dead, whose dying eyes
 Were closed with wail, resume their
 life,
 They would but find in child and wife
 An iron welcome when they rise :

'Twas well, indeed, when warm with wine,
 To pledge them with a kindly tear,
 To talk them o'er, to wish them here,
 To count their memories half divine ;

But if they came who past away,
 Behold their brides in other hands ;
 The hard heir strides about their
 lands,
 And will not yield them for a day.

Yea, tho' their sons were none of these,
 Not less the yet-loved sire would
 make
 Confusion worse than death, and
 shake
 The pillars of domestic peace.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me :
 Whatever change the years have
 wrought,
 I find not yet one lonely thought
 That cries against my wish for thee.

XCI

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
 And rarely pipes the mounted thrush ;
 Or underneath the barren bush
 Flits by the sea-blue bird of March ;

Come, wear the form by which I know
 Thy spirit in time among thy peers ;
 The hope of unaccomplish'd years
 Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
 May breathe, with many roses sweet,
 Upon the thousand waves of wheat,
 That ripple round the lonely grange ;

Come : not in watches of the night,
 But where the sunbeam broodeth
 warm,
 Come, beauteous in thine after form,
 And like a finer light in light.

XCII

If any vision should reveal
 Thy likeness, I might count it vain
 As but the canker of the brain ;
 Yea, tho' it spake and made appeal

To chances where our lots were cast
 Together in the days behind,
 I might but say, I hear a wind
 Of memory murmuring the past.

Yea, tho' it spake and bared to view
 A fact within the coming year ;
 And tho' the months, revolving near,
 Should prove the phantom-warning true,

They might not seem thy prophecies,
 But spiritual presentiments,
 And such refraction of events
 As often rises ere they rise.

XCIII

I shall not see thee. Dare I say
 No spirit ever brake the band
 That stays him from the native land
 Where first he walk'd when claspt in clay ?

No visual shade of some one lost,
 But he, the Spirit himself, may come
 Where all the nerve of sense is
 numb ;
 Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

O, therefore from thy sightless range
 With gods in un conjectured bliss,
 O, from the distance of the abyss
 Of tenfold-complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter ; hear
 The wish too strong for words to
 name ;
 That in this blindness of the frame
 My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

XCIV

How pure at heart and sound in head,
 With what divine affections bold
 Should be the man whose thought
 would hold
 An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
 The spirits from their golden day,
 Except, like them, thou too canst say,
 My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
 Imaginations calm and fair,
 The memory like a cloudless air,
 The conscience as a sea at rest :

But when the heart is full of din,
 And doubt beside the portal waits,
 They can but listen at the gates,
 And hear the household jar within.

xcv

By night we linger'd on the lawn,
 For underfoot the herb was dry ;
 And genial warmth ; and o'er the sky
 The silvery haze of summer drawn ;

And calm that let the tapers burn
 Unwavering : not a cricket chirr'd :
 The brook alone far-off was heard,
 And on the board the fluttering urn :

And bats went round in fragrant skies,
 And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes
 That haunt the dusk, with ermine
 capes
 And woolly breasts and beaded eyes ;

While now we sang old songs that peal'd
 From knoll to knoll, where, couch'd
 at ease,
 The white kine glimmer'd, and the
 trees

Laid their dark arms about the field.

But when those others, one by one,
 Withdrew themselves from me and
 night,
 And in the house light after light
 Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart ; I read
 Of that glad year which once had
 been,
 In those fall'n leaves which kept
 their green,
 The noble letters of the dead :

T

And strangely on the silence broke
 The silent-speaking words, and
 strange
 Was love's dumb cry defying change
 To test his worth ; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
 On doubts that drive the coward back,
 And keen thro' wordy snares to track
 Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
 The dead man touch'd me from the
 past,
 And all at once it seem'd at last
 The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
 About empyreal heights of thought,
 And came on that which is, and
 caught

The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out
 The steps of Time—the shocks of
 Chance—

The blows of Death. At length
 my trance
 Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt.

Vague words ! but ah, how hard to frame
 In matter-moulded forms of speech,
 Or ev'n for intellect to reach
 Thro' memory that which I became :

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd
 The knolls once more where, couch'd
 at ease,
 The white kine glimmer'd, and the
 trees

Laid their dark arms about the field :

And suck'd from out the distant gloom
 A breeze began to tremble o'er
 The large leaves of the sycamore,
 And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,
 Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and
 swung
 The heavy-folded rose, and flung
 The lilies to and fro, and said

T

'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away ;
 And East and West, without a
 breath,
 Mixt their dim lights, like life and
 death,
 To broaden into boundless day.

XCVI

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
 Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-
 blue eyes
 Are tender over drowning flies,
 You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not : one indeed I knew
 In many a subtle question versed,
 Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,
 But ever strove to make it true :

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
 At last he beat his music out.
 There lives more faith in honest
 doubt,
 Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd
 strength,
 He would not make his judgment
 blind,
 He faced the spectres of the mind
 And laid them : thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own ;
 And Power was with him in the
 night,
 Which makes the darkness and the
 light,
 And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
 As over Sinai's peaks of old,
 While Israel made their gods of
 gold,
 Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

XCVII

My love has talk'd with rocks and trees ;
 He finds on misty mountain-ground
 His own vast shadow glory-crown'd ;
 He sees himself in all he sees.

Two partners of a married life—
 I look'd on these and thought of thee
 In vastness and in mystery,
 And of my spirit as of a wife.

These two—they dwelt with eye on eye,
 Their hearts of old have beat in
 tune,

Their meetings made December June,
 Their every parting was to die.

Their love has never past away ;
 The days she never can forget
 Are earnest that he loves her yet,
 Whate'er the faithless people say.

Her life is lone, he sits apart,
 He loves her yet, she will not weep,
 Tho' rapt in matters dark and deep
 He seems to slight her simple heart.

He thrids the labyrinth of the mind,
 He reads the secret of the star,
 He seems so near and yet so far,
 He looks so cold : she thinks him kind.

She keeps the gift of years before,
 A wither'd violet is her bliss :
 She knows not what his greatness is,
 For that, for all, she loves him more.

For him she plays, to him she sings
 Of early faith and plighted vows ;
 She knows but matters of the house,
 And he, he knows a thousand things.

Her faith is fixt and cannot move,
 She darkly feels him great and wise,
 She dwells on him with faithful eyes,
 'I cannot understand : I love.'

XCVIII

You leave us : you will see the Rhine,
 And those fair hills I sail'd below,
 When I was there with him ; and go
 By summer belts of wheat and vine

To where he breathed his latest breath,
 That City. All her splendour seems
 No livelier than the wisp that gleams
 On Lethe in the eyes of Death.

Let her great Danube rolling fair
 Enwind her isles, unmark'd of me :
 I have not seen, I will not see
 Vienna ; rather dream that there,

A treble darkness, Evil haunts
 The birth, the bridal ; friend from
 friend
 Is oftener parted, fathers bend
 Above more graves, a thousand wants

Gnarr at the heels of men, and prey
 By each cold hearth, and sadness
 flings
 Her shadow on the blaze of kings :
 And yet myself have heard him say,

That not in any mother town
 With statelier progress to and fro
 The double tides of chariots flow
 By park and suburb under brown

Of lustier leaves ; nor more content,
 He told me, lives in any crowd,
 When all is gay with lamps, and
 loud
 With sport and song, in booth and tent,

Imperial halls, or open plain ;
 And wheels the circled dance, and
 breaks
 The rocket molten into flakes
 Of crimson or in emerald rain.

XCIX

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
 So loud with voices of the birds,
 So thick with lowings of the herds,
 Day, when I lost the flower of men ;

Who tremblest thro' thy darkling red
 On yon swoll'n brook that bubbles
 fast
 By meadows breathing of the past,
 And woodlands holy to the dead ;

Who murmurest in the foliated eaves
 A song that slights the coming care,
 And Autumn laying here and there
 A fiery finger on the leaves ;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
 To myriads on the genial earth,
 Memories of bridal, or of birth,
 And unto myriads more, of death.

O wheresoever those may be,
 Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
 To-day they count as kindred souls ;
 They know me not, but mourn with me.

C

I climb the hill : from end to end
 Of all the landscape underneath,
 I find no place that does not breathe
 Some gracious memory of my friend ;

No gray old grange, or lonely fold,
 Or low morass and whispering
 reed,
 Or simple stile from mead to mead,
 Or sheepwalk up the windy wold ;

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw
 That hears the latest linnet trill,
 Nor quarry trench'd along the hill
 And haunted by the wrangling daw ;

Nor runlet tinkling from the rock ;
 Nor pastoral rivulet that swerves
 To left and right thro' meadowy
 curves,
 That feed the mothers of the flock ;

But each has pleased a kindred eye,
 And each reflects a kindlier day ;
 And, leaving these, to pass away,
 I think once more he seems to die.

CI

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
 The tender blossom flutter down,
 Unloved, that beech will gather
 brown,
 This maple burn itself away ;

Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair,
 Ray round with flames her disk of
 seed,
 And many a rose-carnation feed
 With summer spice the humming air ;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
 The brook shall babble down the
 plain,
 At noon or when the lesser wain
 Is twisting round the polar star ;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
 And flood the haunts of hern and
 crake ;
 Or into silver arrows break
 The sailing moon in creek and cove ;

Till from the garden and the wild
 A fresh association blow,
 And year by year the landscape
 grow
 Familiar to the stranger's child ;

As year by year the labourer tills
 His wonted glebe, or lops the glades ;
 And year by year our memory fades
 From all the circle of the hills.

CII

We leave the well-beloved place
 Where first we gazed upon the sky ;
 The roofs, that heard our earliest
 cry,
 Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,
 As down the garden-walks I move,
 Two spirits of a diverse love
 Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, ' Here thy boyhood sung
 Long since its matin song, and
 heard
 The low love-language of the bird
 In native hazels tassel-hung.'

The other answers, ' Yea, but here
 Thy feet have stray'd in after hours
 With thy lost friend among the
 bowers,
 And this hath made them trebly dear.'

These two have striven half the day,
 And each prefers his separate claim,
 Poor rivals in a losing game,
 That will not yield each other way.

I turn to go : my feet are set
 To leave the pleasant fields and
 farms ;
 They mix in one another's arms
 To one pure image of regret.

CIII

On that last night before we went
 From out the doors where I was bred,
 I dream'd a vision of the dead,
 Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,
 And maidens with me : distant hills
 From hidden summits fed with rills
 A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.
 They sang of what is wise and good
 And graceful. In the centre stood
 A statue veil'd, to which they sang ;

And which, tho' veil'd, was known to me,
 The shape of him I loved, and love
 For ever : then flew in a dove
 And brought a summons from the sea :

And when they learnt that I must go
 They wept and wail'd, but led the
 way

To where a little shallop lay
 At anchor in the flood below ;

And on by many a level mead,
 And shadowing bluff that made the
 banks,
 We glided winding under ranks
 Of iris, and the golden reed ;

And still as vaster grew the shore
 And roll'd the floods in grander
 space,
 The maidens gather'd strength and
 grace
 And presence, lordlier than before ;

And I myself, who sat apart
 And watch'd them, wax'd in every
 limb ;
 I felt the thews of Anakim,
 The pulses of a Titan's heart ;

As one would sing the death of war,
 And one would chant the history
 Of that great race, which is to be,
 And one the shaping of a star ;

Until the forward-creeping tides
 Began to foam, and we to draw
 From deep to deep, to where we saw
 A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,
 But thrice as large as man he bent
 To greet us. Up the side I went,
 And fell in silence on his neck :

Whereat those maidens with one mind
 Bewail'd their lot ; I did them wrong :
 'We served thee here,' they said,
 'so long,
 And wilt thou leave us now behind ?'

So rapt I was, they could not win
 An answer from my lips, but he
 Replying, 'Enter likewise ye
 And go with us' : they enter'd in.

And while the wind began to sweep
 A music out of sheet and shroud,
 Westeer'd hertoward a crimson cloud
 That landlike slept along the deep.

CIV

The time draws near the birth of Christ ;
 The moon is hid, the night is still ;
 A single church below the hill
 Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
 That wakens at this hour of rest
 A single murmur in the breast,
 That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
 In lands where not a memory strays,
 Nor landmark breathes of other days,
 But all is new unhallow'd ground.

CV

To-night ungather'd let us leave
 This laurel, let this holly stand :
 We live within the stranger's land,
 And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
 And silent under other snows :
 There in due time the woodbine
 blows,
 The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
 The genial hour with mask and
 mime ;
 For change of place, like growth of
 time,
 Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
 By which our lives are chiefly
 proved,
 A little spare the night I loved,
 And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
 Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm ;
 For who would keep an ancient form
 Thro' which the spirit breathes no more ?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast ;
 Nor harp be touch'd, nor flute be
 blown ;
 No dance, no motion, save alone
 What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.
 Long sleeps the summer in the seed ;
 Run out your measured arcs, and
 lead
 The closing cycle rich in good.

CVI

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
 The flying cloud, the frosty light :
 The year is dying in the night ;
 Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
 Ring, happy bells, across the snow :
 The year is going, let him go ;
 Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
 For those that here we see no more ;
 Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
 Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
 And ancient forms of party strife ;
 Ring in the nobler modes of life,
 With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
 The faithless coldness of the times ;
 Ring out, ring out my mournful
 rhymes,
 But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
 The civic slander and the spite ;
 Ring in the love of truth and right,
 Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
 Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
 Ring out the thousand wars of old,
 Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
 The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
 Ring out the darkness of the land,
 Ring in the Christ that is to be.

CVII

It is the day when he was born,
 A bitter day that early sank
 Behind a purple-frosty bank
 Of vapour, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
 To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
 The blast of North and East, and ice
 Makes daggers at the sharpen'd eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns
 To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
 Above the wood which grides and
 clangs

Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass
 To darken on the rolling brine
 That breaks the coast. But fetch
 the wine,

Arrange the board and brim the glass ;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
 To make a solid core of heat ;
 Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
 Of all things ev'n as he were by ;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
 With books and music, surely we
 Will drink to him, whate'er he be,
 And sing the songs he loved to hear.

CVIII

I will not shut me from my kind,
 And, lest I stiffen into stone,
 I will not eat my heart alone,
 Nor feed with sighs a passing wind :

What profit lies in barren faith,
 And vacant yearning, tho' with might
 To scale the heaven's highest height,
 Or dive below the wells of Death ?

What find I in the highest place,
 But mine own phantom chanting
 hymns ?

And on the depths of death there
 swims

The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be
 Of sorrow under human skies :
 'Tis held that sorrow makes us
 wise,

Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

CIX

Heart-affluence in discursive talk
 From household fountains never
 dry ;

The critic clearness of an eye,
 That saw thro' all the Muses' walk ;

Seraphic intellect and force
 To seize and throw the doubts of
 man ;

Impassion'd logic, which outran
 The hearer in its fiery course ;

High nature amorous of the good,
 But touch'd with no ascetic gloom ;
 And passion pure in snowy bloom
 Thro' all the years of April blood ;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
 Of freedom in her regal seat
 Of England ; not the schoolboy heat,
 The blind hysterics of the Celt ;

And manhood fused with female grace
 In such a sort, the child would twine
 A trustful hand, unask'd, in thine,
 And find his comfort in thy face ;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
 Have look'd on : if they look'd in
 vain,
 My shame is greater who remain,
 Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

CX

Thy converse drew us with delight,
 The men of rathe and riper years :
 The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,
 Forgot his weakness in thy sight.

On thee the loyal-hearted hung,
 The proud was half disarm'd of
 pride,
 Nor cared the serpent at thy side
 To flicker with his double tongue.

The stern were mild when thou wert by,
 The flippant put himself to school
 And heard thee, and the brazen fool
 Was soften'd, and he knew not why ;

While I, thy nearest, sat apart,
 And felt thy triumph was as mine ;
 And loved them more, that they
 were thine,

The graceful tact, the Christian art ;

Nor mine the sweetness or the skill,
 But mine the love that will not tire,
 And, born of love, the vague desire
 That spurs an imitative will.

CXI

The churl in spirit, up or down
 Along the scale of ranks, thro' all,
 To him who grasps a golden ball,
 By blood a king, at heart a clown ;

The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
 His want in forms for fashion's
 sake,
 Will let his coltish nature break
 At seasons thro' the gilded pale :

For who can always act ? but he,
 To whom a thousand memories call,
 Not being less but more than all
 The gentleness he seem'd to be,

Best seem'd the thing he was, and join'd
 Each office of the social hour
 To noble manners, as the flower
 And native growth of noble mind ;

Nor ever narrowness or spite,
 Or villain fancy fleeting by,
 Drew in the expression of an eye,
 Where God and Nature met in light ;

And thus he bore without abuse
 The grand old name of gentleman,
 Defamed by every charlatan,
 And soil'd with all ignoble use.

CXII

High wisdom holds my wisdom less,
 That I, who gaze with temperate
 eyes
 On glorious insufficiencies,
 Set light by narrower perfectness.

But thou, that fillest all the room
 Of all my love, art reason why
 I seem to cast a careless eye
 On souls, the lesser lords of doom.

For what wert thou ? some novel power
 Sprang up for ever at a touch,
 And hope could never, hope too
 much,
 In watching thee from hour to hour,

Large elements in order brought,
 And tracts of calm from tempest
 made,
 And world-wide fluctuation sway'd
 In vassal tides that follow'd thought.

CXIII

'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise ;
 Yet how much wisdom sleeps with
 thee
 Which not alone had guided me,
 But served the seasons that may rise ;

For can I doubt, who knew thee keen
 In intellect, with force and skill
 To strive, to fashion, to fulfil—
 I doubt not what thou wouldst have been :

A life in civic action warm,
 A soul on highest mission sent,
 A potent voice of Parliament,
 A pillar steadfast in the storm,

Should licensed boldness gather force,
 Becoming, when the time has birth,
 A lever to uplift the earth
 And roll it in another course,

With thousand shocks that come and go,
 With agonies, with energies,
 With overthrowings, and with cries,
 And undulations to and fro.

CXIV

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall
 rail
 Against her beauty? May she mix
 With men and prosper! Who shall
 fix
 Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire :
 She sets her forward countenance
 And leaps into the future chance,
 Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain—
 She cannot fight the fear of death.
 What is she, cut from love and faith,
 But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst
 All barriers in her onward race
 For power. Let her know her place;
 She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
 If all be not in vain; and guide
 Her footsteps, moving side by side
 With wisdom, like the younger child :

For she is earthly of the mind,
 But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
 O, friend, who camest to thy goal
 So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,
 Who grewest not alone in power
 And knowledge, but by year and
 hour
 In reverence and in charity.

CXV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
 Now burgeons every maze of quick
 About the flowering squares, and
 thick
 By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
 The distance takes a lovelier hue,
 And drown'd in yonder living blue
 The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
 The flocks are whiter down the vale,
 And milkier every milky sail
 On winding stream or distant sea ;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
 In yonder greening gleam, and fly
 The happy birds, that change their
 sky
 To build and brood ; that live their lives

From land to land ; and in my breast
 Spring wakens too ; and my regret
 Becomes an April violet,
 And buds and blossoms like the rest.

CXVI

Is it, then, regret for buried time
 That keenlier in sweet April wakes,
 And meets the year, and gives and
 takes

The colours of the crescent prime ?

Not all : the songs, the stirring air,
 The life re-orient out of dust,
 Cry thro' the sense to hearten trust
 In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret : the face will shine
 Upon me, while I muse alone ;
 And that dear voice, I once have
 known,
 Still speak to me of me and mine :

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
 For days of happy commune dead ;
 Less yearning for the friendship
 fled,
 Than some strong bond which is to be.

CXVII

O days and hours, your work is this
 To hold me from my proper place,
 A little while from his embrace,
 For fuller gain of after bliss :

That out of distance might ensue
 Desire of nearness doubly sweet ;
 And unto meeting when we meet,
 Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
 And every span of shade that
 steals,
 And every kiss of toothed wheels,
 And all the courses of the suns.

CXVIII

Contemplate all this work of Time,
 The giant labouring in his youth ;
 Nor dream of human love and truth,
 As dying Nature's earth and lime ;

But trust that those we call the dead
 Are breathers of an ampler day
 For ever nobler ends. They say,
 The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
 And grew to seeming-random forms,
 The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
 Till at the last arose the man ;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to
 clime,
 The herald of a higher race,
 And of himself in higher place,
 If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more ;
 Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
 Like glories, move his course, and
 show
 That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
 And heated hot with burning fears,
 And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
 And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
 The reeling Faun, the sensual feast ;
 Move upward, working out the beast,
 And let the ape and tiger die.

CXIX

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
 So quickly, not as one that weeps
 I come once more ; the city sleeps ;
 I smell the meadow in the street ;

I hear a chirp of birds ; I see
 Betwixt the black fronts long-with-
 drawn
 A light-blue lane of early dawn,
 And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
 And bright the friendship of thine
 eye ;
 And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
 I take the pressure of thine hand.

CXX

I trust I have not wasted breath :
 I think we are not wholly brain,
 Magnetic mockeries ; not in vain,
 Like Paul with beasts, I fought with
 Death ;

Not only cunning casts in clay :
 Let Science prove we are, and then
 What matters Science unto men,
 At least to me ? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
 Hereafter, up from childhood shape
 His action like the greater ape,
 But I was *born* to other things.

CXXI

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
 And ready, thou, to die with him,
 Thou watchest all things ever dim
 And dimmer, and a glory done :

The team is loosen'd from the wain,
The boat is drawn upon the shore ;
Thou listenest to the closing door,
And life is darken'd in the brain.

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,
By thee the world's great work is
heard
Beginning, and the wakeful bird ;
Behind thee comes the greater light :

The market boat is on the stream,
And voices hail it from the brink ;
Thou hear'st the village hammer
clink,
And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
For what is one, the first, the last,
Thou, like my present and my
past,
Thy place is changed ; thou art the
same.

CXXII

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,
While I rose up against my doom,
And yearn'd to burst the folded
gloom,
To bare the eternal Heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,
The strong imagination roll
A sphere of stars about my soul,
In all her motion one with law ;

If thou wert with me, and the grave
Divide us not, be with me now,
And enter in at breast and brow,
Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quicken'd with a livelier breath,
And like an inconsiderate boy,
As in the former flash of joy,
I slip the thoughts of life and death ;

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,
And every dew-drop paints a bow,
The wizard lightnings deeply glow,
And every thought breaks out a rose.

CXXIII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou
seen !

There where the long street roars,
hath been

The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing
stands ;

They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and
go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it
true ;

For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

CXXIV

That which we dare invoke to bless ;
Our dearest faith ; our ghastliest
doubt ;

He, They, One, All ; within, with-
out ;

The Power in darkness whom we guess ;

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye ;
Nor thro' the questions men may
try,

The petty cobwebs we have spun :

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice 'believe no more'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep ;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear :
But that blind clamour made me
wise ;

Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near ;

And what I am beheld again
 What is, and no man understands ;
 And out of darkness came the hands
 That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

CXXV

Whatever I have said or sung,
 Some bitter notes my harp would give,
 Yea, tho' there often seem'd to live
 A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her youth ;
 She did but look through dimmer
 eyes ;
 Or Love but play'd with gracious lies,
 Because he felt so fix'd in truth :

And if the song were full of care,
 He breathed the spirit of the song ;
 And if the words were sweet and
 strong

He set his royal signet there ;

Abiding with me till I sail
 To seek thee on the mystic deeps,
 And this electric force, that keeps
 A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

CXXVI

Love is and was my Lord and King,
 And in his presence I attend
 To hear the tidings of my friend,
 Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
 And will be, tho' as yet I keep
 Within his court on earth, and sleep
 Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
 Who moves about from place to place,
 And whispers to the worlds of space,
 In the deep night, that all is well.

CXXVII

And all is well, tho' faith and form
 Be sunder'd in the night of fear ;
 Well roars the storm to those that
 hear
 A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
 And justice, ev'n tho' thrice again
 The red fool-fury of the Seine
 Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,
 And him, the lazar, in his rags :
 They tremble, the sustaining crags ;
 The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood ;
 The fortress crashes from on high,
 The brute earth lightens to the sky,
 And the great Æon sinks in blood,

And compass'd by the fires of Hell ;
 While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
 O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
 And smilest, knowing all is well.

CXXVIII

The love that rose on stronger wings,
 Unpalsied when he met with Death,
 Is comrade of the lesser faith
 That sees the course of human things.

No doubt vast eddies in the flood
 Of onward time shall yet be made,
 And throned races may degrade ;
 Yet O ye mysteries of good,

Wild Hours that fly with Hope and Fear,
 If all your office had to do
 With old results that look like new ;
 If this were all your mission here,

To draw, to sheathe a useless sword,
 To fool the crowd with glorious
 lies,

To cleave a creed in sects and cries,
 To change the bearing of a word,

To shift an arbitrary power,
 To cramp the student at his desk,
 To make old bareness picturesque
 And tuft with grass a feudal tower ;

Why then my scorn might well descend
 On you and yours. I see in part
 That all, as in some piece of art,
 Is toil cöoperant to an end.

CXXIX

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
 So far, so near in woe and weal;
 O loved the most, when most I feel
 There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;
 Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
 Dear heavenly friend that canst not
 die,
 Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
 Loved deeper, darklier understood;
 Behold, I dream a dream of good,
 And mingle all the world with thee.

CXXX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
 I hear thee where the waters run;
 Thou standest in the rising sun,
 And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
 But tho' I seem in star and flower
 To feel thee some diffusive power,
 I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;
 My love is vaster passion now;
 Tho' mix'd with God and Nature
 thou,
 I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
 I have thee still, and I rejoice;
 I prosper, circled with thy voice;
 I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

CXXXI

O living will that shalt endure
 When all that seems shall suffer
 shock,
 Rise in the spiritual rock,
 Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
 A voice as unto him that hears,
 A cry above the conquer'd years
 To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
 The truths that never can be proved
 Until we close with all we loved,
 And all we flow from, soul in soul.

O true and tried, so well and long,
 Demand not thou a marriage lay;
 In that it is thy marriage day
 Is music more than any song.

Nor have I felt so much of bliss
 Since first he told me that he loved
 A daughter of our house; nor proved
 Since that dark day a day like this;

Tho' I since then have number'd o'er
 Some thrice three years: they went
 and came,
 Remade the blood and changed the
 frame,
 And yet is love not less, but more;

No longer caring to embalm
 In dying songs a dead regret,
 But like a statue solid-set,
 And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more
 Than in the summers that are flown,
 For I myself with these have grown
 To something greater than before;

Which makes appear the songs I made
 As echoes out of weaker times,
 As half but idle brawling rhymes,
 The sport of random sun and shade.

But where is she, the bridal flower,
 That must be made a wife ere noon?
 She enters, glowing like the moon
 Of Eden on its bridal bower:

On me she bends her blissful eyes
 And then on thee; they meet thy look
 And brighten like the star that shook
 Betwixt the palms of paradise.

O when her life was yet in bud,
 He too foretold the perfect rose.
 For thee she grew, for thee she grows
 For ever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy ; full of power ;
 As gentle ; liberal-minded, great,
 Consistent ; wearing all that weight
 Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out : the noon is near,
 And I must give away the bride ;
 She fears not, or with thee beside
 And me behind her, will not fear.

For I that danced her on my knee,
 That watch'd her on her nurse's arm,
 That shielded all her life from harm
 At last must part with her to thee ;

Now waiting to be made a wife,
 Her feet, my darling, on the dead ;
 Their pensive tablets round her head,
 And the most living words of life

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,
 The 'wilt thou' answer'd, and again
 The 'wilt thou' ask'd, till out of
 twain

Her sweet 'I will' has made you one.

Now sign your names, which shall be
 read,

Mute symbols of a joyful morn,
 By village eyes as yet unborn ;
 The names are sign'd, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells
 The joy to every wandering breeze ;
 The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
 The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

O happy hour, and happier hours
 Await them. Many a merry face
 Salutes them—maidens of the place,
 That pelt us in the porch with flowers.

O happy hour, behold the bride
 With him to whom her hand I gave.
 They leave the porch, they pass the
 grave
 That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me,
 For them the light of life increased,
 Who stay to share the morning feast,
 Who rest to-night beside the sea.

Let all my genial spirits advance
 To meet and greet a whiter sun ;
 My drooping memory will not shun
 The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,
 And hearts are warm'd and faces
 bloom,
 As drinking health to bride and
 groom
 We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I
 Conjecture of a stiller guest,
 Perchance, perchance, among the
 rest,
 And, tho' in silence, wishing joy.

But they must go, the time draws on,
 And those white-favour'd horses
 wait ;
 They rise, but linger ; it is late ;
 Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us like the dark
 From little cloudlets on the grass,
 But sweeps away as out we pass
 To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,
 And talk of others that are wed,
 And how she look'd, and what he
 said,
 And back we come at fall of dew.

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,
 The shade of passing thought, the
 wealth
 Of words and wit, the double health,
 The crowning cup, the three-times-three,

And last the dance ;—till I retire :
 Dumb is that tower which spake so
 loud,
 And high in heaven the streaming
 cloud,
 And on the downs a rising fire :

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
 Till over down and over dale
 All night the shining vapour sail
 And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
 And catch at every mountain head,
 And o'er the friths that branch and
 spread
 Their sleeping silver thro' the hills ;
 And touch with shade the bridal doors,
 With tender gloom the roof, the
 wall ;
 And breaking let the splendour fall
 To spangle all the happy shores
 By which they rest, and ocean sounds,
 And, star and system rolling past,
 A soul shall draw from out the vast
 And strike his being into bounds,
 And, moved thro' life of lower phase,
 Result in man, be born and think,
 And act and love, a closer link
 Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
 On knowledge ; under whose com-
 mand
 Is Earth and Earth's, and in their
 hand
 Is Nature like an open book ;
 No longer half-akin to brute,
 For all we thought and loved and did,
 And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed
 Of what in them is flower and fruit ;
 Whereof the man, that with me trod
 This planet, was a noble type
 Appearing ere the times were ripe,
 That friend of mine who lives in God,
 That God, which ever lives and loves,
 One God, one law, one element,
 And one far-off divine event,
 To which the whole creation moves.

MAUD; A MONODRAMA

PART I

I

I

I HATE the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
 Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath,
 The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
 And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers ' Death.'

II

For there in the ghastly pit long since a body was found,
 His who had given me life—O father ! O God ! was it well ?—
 Mangled, and flatten'd, and crush'd, and dinted into the ground :
 There yet lies the rock that fell with him when he fell.

III

Did he fling himself down ? who knows ? for a vast speculation had fail'd,
 And ever he mutter'd and madden'd, and ever wann'd with despair,
 And out he walk'd when the wind like a broken worldling wail'd,
 And the flying gold of the ruin'd woodlands drove thro' the air.

IV

I remember the time, for the roots of my hair were stirr'd
 By a shuffled step, by a dead weight trail'd, by a whisper'd fright,
 And my pulses closed their gates with a shock on my heart as I heard
 The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divide the shuddering night.

V

Villainy somewhere ! whose ? One says, we are villains all.
Not he : his honest fame should at least by me be maintained :
But that old man, now lord of the broad estate and the Hall,
Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had left us flaccid and drain'd.

VI

Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace ? we have made them a curse,
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own ;
And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse
Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone ?

VII

But these are the days of advance, the works of the men of mind,
When who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware or his word ?
Is it peace or war ? Civil war, as I think, and that of a kind
The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the sword.

VIII

Sooner or later I too may passively take the print
Of the golden age—why not ? I have neither hope nor trust ;
May make my heart as a millstone, set my face as a flint,
Cheat and be cheated, and die : who knows ? we are ashes and dust.

IX

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,
When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine.
When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie ;
Peace in her vineyard—yes !—but a company forges the wine.

X

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's head,
Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the trampled wife,
And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,
And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life,

XI

And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the villainous centre-bits
Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless nights,
While another is cheating the sick of a few last gasps, as he sits
To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights.

XII

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee,
And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's bones,
Is it peace or war ? better, war ! loud war by land and by sea,
War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones.

XIII

For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder round by the hill,
And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the three-decker out of the foam,
That the smooth-faced snubnosed rogue would leap from his counter and till,
And strike, if he could, were it but with his cheating yardwand, home.——

XIV

What ! am I raging alone as my father raged in his mood ?
Must *I* too creep to the hollow and dash myself down and die
Rather than hold by the law that I made, nevermore to brood
On a horror of shatter'd limbs and a wretched swindler's lie ?

XV

Would there be sorrow for *me* ? there was *love* in the passionate shriek,
Love for the silent thing that had made false haste to the grave—
Wrapt in a cloak, as I saw him, and thought he would rise and speak
And rave at the lie and the liar, ah God, as he used to rave.

XVI

I am sick of the Hall and the hill, I am sick of the moor and the main.
Why should I stay ? can a sweeter chance ever come to me here ?
O, having the nerves of motion as well as the nerves of pain,
Were it not wise if I fled from the place and the pit and the fear ?

XVII

Workmen up at the Hall !—they are coming back from abroad ;
The dark old place will be gilt by the touch of a millionaire :
I have heard, I know not whence, of the singular beauty of Maud ;
I play'd with the girl when a child ; she promised then to be fair.

XVIII

Maud with her venturous climbings and tumbles and childish escapes,
Maud the delight of the village, the ringing joy of the Hall,
Maud with her sweet purse-mouth when my father dangled the grapes,
Maud the beloved of my mother, the moon-faced darling of all,—

XIX

What is she now ? My dreams are bad. She may bring me a curse.
No, there is fatter game on the moor ; she will let me alone.
Thanks, for the fiend best knows whether woman or man be the worse.
I will bury myself in myself, and the Devil may pipe to his own.

II

Long have I sigh'd for a calm : God grant I may find it at last !
It will never be broken by Maud, she has neither savour nor salt,
But a cold and clear-cut face, as I found when her carriage past,
Perfectly beautiful : let it be granted her : where is the fault ?

All that I saw (for her eyes were downcast, not to be seen)
 Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
 Dead perfection, no more ; nothing more, if it had not been
 For a chance of travel, a paleness, an hour's defect of the rose,
 Or an underlip, you may call it a little too ripe, too full,
 Or the least little delicate aquiline curve in a sensitive nose,
 From which I escaped heart-free, with the least little touch of spleen.

III

Cold and clear-cut face, why come you so cruelly meek,
 Breaking a slumber in which all spleenful folly was drown'd,
 Pale with the golden beam of an eyelash dead on the cheek,
 Passionless, pale, cold face, star-sweet on a gloom profound ;
 Womanlike, taking revenge too deep for a transient wrong
 Done but in thought to your beauty, and ever as pale as before
 Growing and fading and growing upon me without a sound,
 Luminous, gemlike, ghostlike, deathlike, half the night long
 Growing and fading and growing, till I could bear it no more,
 But arose, and all by myself in my own dark garden ground,
 Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung shipwrecking roar,
 Now to the scream of a madden'd beach dragg'd down by the wave,
 Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly glimmer, and found
 The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low in his grave.

IV

I

A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime
 In the little grove where I sit—ah, wherefore cannot I be
 Like things of the season gay, like the bountiful season bland,
 When the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a softer clime,
 Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent of sea,
 The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring of the land ?

II

Below me, there, is the village, and looks how quiet and small !
 And yet bubbles o'er like a city, with gossip, scandal, and spite ;
 And Jack on his ale-house bench has as many lies as a Czar ;
 And here on the landward side, by a red rock, glimmers the Hall ;
 And up in the high Hall-garden I see her pass like a light ;
 But sorrow seize me if ever that light be my leading star !

III

When have I bow'd to her father, the wrinkled head of the race ?
 I met her to-day with her brother, but not to her brother I bow'd :
 I bow'd to his lady-sister as she rode by on the moor ;
 But the fire of a foolish pride flash'd over her beautiful face.
 O child, you wrong your beauty, believe it, in being so proud ;
 Your father has wealth well-gotten, and I am nameless and poor.

IV

I keep but a man and a maid, ever ready to slander and steal ;
 I know it, and smile a hard-set smile, like a stoic, or like
 A wiser epicurean, and let the world have its way :
 For nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal ;
 The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow spear'd by the shrike,
 And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of plunder and prey.

V

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and Beauty fair in her flower ;
 Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen hand at a game
 That pushes us off from the board, and others ever succeed ?
 Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other here for an hour ;
 We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and grin at a brother's shame ;
 However we brave it out, we men are a little breed.

VI

A monstrous eft was of old the Lord and Master of Earth,
 For him did his high sun flame, and his river billowing ran,
 And he felt himself in his force to be Nature's crowning race.
 As nine months go to the shaping an infant ripe for his birth,
 So many a million of ages have gone to the making of man :
 He now is first, but is he the last ? is he not too base ?

VII

The man of science himself is fonder of glory, and vain,
 An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit bounded and poor ;
 The passionate heart of the poet is whirl'd into folly and vice.
 I would not marvel at either, but keep a temperate brain ;
 For not to desire or admire, if a man could learn it, were more
 Than to walk all day like the sultan of old in a garden of spice.

VIII

For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by the veil.
 Who knows the ways of the world, how God will bring them about ?
 Our planet is one, the suns are many, the world is wide.
 Shall I weep if a Poland fall ? shall I shriek if a Hungary fail ?
 Or an infant civilisation be ruled with rod or with knout ?
 I have not made the world, and He that made it will guide.

IX

Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland ways,
 Where if I cannot be gay let a passionless peace be my lot,
 Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in the hubbub of lies ;
 From the long-neck'd geese of the world that are ever hissing dispraise
 Because their natures are little, and, whether he heed it or not,
 Where each man walks with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies.

X

And most of all would I flee from the cruel madness of love,
The honey of poison-flowers and all the measureless ill.
Ah Maud, you milkwhite fawn, you are all unmeet for a wife.
Your mother is mute in her grave as her image in marble above ;
Your father is ever in London, you wander about at your will ;
You have but fed on the roses and lain in the lilies of life.

V

I

A voice by the cedar tree
In the meadow under the Hall !
She is singing an air that is known to me,
A passionate ballad gallant and gay,
A martial song like a trumpet's call !
Singing alone in the morning of life,
In the happy morning of life and of May,
Singing of men that in battle array,
Ready in heart and ready in hand,
March with banner and bugle and fife
To the death, for their native land.

II

Maud with her exquisite face,
And wild voice pealing up to the sunny
sky,
And feet like sunny gems on an English
green,
Maud in the light of her youth and her
grace,
Singing of Death, and of Honour that
cannot die,
Till I well could weep for a time so sordid
and mean,
And myself so languid and base.

III

Silence, beautiful voice !
Be still, for you only trouble the mind
With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,
A glory I shall not find.
Still ! I will hear you no more,
For your sweetness hardly leaves me a
choice
But to move to the meadow and fall before
Her feet on the meadow grass, and adore,
Not her, who is neither courtly nor kind,
Not her, not her, but a voice.

VI

I

Morning arises stormy and pale,
No sun, but a wannish glare
In fold upon fold of hueless cloud,
And the budded peaks of the wood are
bow'd
Caught and cuff'd by the gale :
I had fancied it would be fair.

II

Whom but Maud should I meet
Last night, when the sunset burn'd
On the blossom'd gable-ends
At the head of the village street,
Whom but Maud should I meet ?
And she touch'd my hand with a smile
so sweet,
She made me divine amends
For a courtesy not return'd.

III

And thus a delicate spark
Of glowing and growing light
Thro' the livelong hours of the dark
Kept itself warm in the heart of my
dreams,
Ready to burst in a colour'd flame ;
Till at last when the morning came
In a cloud, it faded, and seems
But an ashen-gray delight.

IV

What if with her sunny hair,
And smile as sunny as cold,
She meant to weave me a snare
Of some coquettish deceit,
Cleopatra-like as of old
To entangle me when we met,
To have her lion roll in a silken net
And fawn at a victor's feet.

V

Ah, what shall I be at fifty
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?
Yet, if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile were all that I dream'd,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VI

What if tho' her eye seem'd full
Of a kind intent to me,
What if that dandy-despot, he,
That jewell'd mass of millinery,
That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian Bull
Smelling of musk and of insolence,
Her brother, from whom I keep aloof,
Who wants the finer politic sense
To mask, tho' but in his own behoof,
With a glassy smile his brutal scorn—
What if he had told her yestermorn
How prettily for his own sweet sake
A face of tenderness might be feign'd,
And a moist mirage in desert eyes,
That so, when the rotten hustings shake
In another month to his brazen lies,
A wretched vote may be gain'd.

VII

For a raven ever croaks, at my side,
Keep watch and ward, keep watch and
ward,
Or thou wilt prove their tool.
Yea, too, myself from myself I guard,
For often a man's own angry pride
Is cap and bells for a fool.

VIII

Perhaps the smile and tender tone
Came out of her pitying womanhood,
For am I not, am I not, here alone
So many a summer since she died,
My mother, who was so gentle and
good?
Living alone in an empty house,
Here half-hid in the gleaming wood,
Where I hear the dead at midday moan,

And the shrieking rush of the wainscot
mouse,

And my own sad name in corners cried,
When the shiver of dancing leaves is
thrown

About its echoing chambers wide,
Till a morbid hate and horror have
grown

Of a world in which I have hardly mixt,
And a morbid eating lichen fixt
On a heart half-turn'd to stone.

IX

O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught
By that you swore to withstand?

For what was it else within me wrought
But, I fear, the new strong wine of
love,

That made my tongue so stammer and
trip

When I saw the treasured splendour, her
hand,

Come sliding out of her sacred glove,
And the sunlight broke from her lip?

X

I have play'd with her when a child;
She remembers it now we meet.
Ah well, well, well, I *may* be beguiled
By some coquettish deceit.

Yet, if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile had all that I dream'd,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VII

I

Did I hear it half in a doze
Long since, I know not where?
Did I dream it an hour ago,
When asleep in this arm-chair?

II

Men were drinking together,
Drinking and talking of me;
'Well, if it prove a girl, the boy
Will have plenty: so let it be.'

III

Is it an echo of something
 Read with a boy's delight,
 Viziers nodding together
 In some Arabian night?

IV

Strange, that I hear two men,
 Somewhere, talking of me;
 'Well, if it prove a girl, my boy
 Will have plenty: so let it be.'

VIII

She came to the village church,
 And sat by a pillar alone;
 An angel watching an urn
 Wept over her, carved in stone;
 And once, but once, she lifted her
 eyes,
 And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd
 To find they were met by my own;
 And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat
 stronger
 And thicker, until I heard no longer
 The snowy-banded, dilettante,
 Delicate-handed priest intone;
 And thought, is it pride, and mused and
 sigh'd
 'No surely, now it cannot be pride.'

IX

I was walking a mile,
 More than a mile from the shore,
 The sun look'd out with a smile
 Betwixt the cloud and the moor,
 And riding at set of day
 Over the dark moor land,
 Rapidly riding far away,
 She waved to me with her hand.
 There were two at her side,
 Something flash'd in the sun,
 Down by the hill I saw them ride,
 In a moment they were gone:
 Like a sudden spark
 Struck vainly in the night,
 Then returns the dark
 With no more hope of light.

X

I

Sick, am I sick of a jealous dread?
 Was not one of the two at her side
 This new-made lord, whose splendour
 plucks
 The slavish hat from the villager's head?
 Whose old grandfather has lately died,
 Gone to a blacker pit, for whom
 Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks
 And laying his trams in a poison'd gloom
 Wrought, till he crept from a gutted
 mine

Master of half a servile shire,
 And left his coal all turn'd into gold
 To a grandson, first of his noble line,
 Rich in the grace all women desire,
 Strong in the power that all men adore,
 And simper and set their voices lower,
 And soften as if to a girl, and hold
 Awe-stricken breaths at a work divine,
 Seeing his gewgaw castle shine,
 New as his title, built last year,
 There amid perky larches and pine,
 And over the sullen-purple moor
 (Look at it) pricking a cockney ear.

> II

What, has he found my jewel out?
 For one of the two that rode at her side
 Bound for the Hall, I am sure was he:
 Bound for the Hall, and I think for a
 bride.

Blithe would her brother's acceptance be.
 Maud could be gracious too, no doubt
 To a lord, a captain, a padded shape,
 A bought commission, a waxen face,
 A rabbit mouth that is ever agape—
 Bought? what is it he cannot buy?
 And therefore splenetic, personal, base,
 A wounded thing with a rancorous cry,
 At war with myself and a wretched race,
 Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I.

III

Last week came one to the county town,
 To preach our poor little army down,
 And play the game of the despot kings,

Tho' the state has done it and thrice as well :

This broad-brimm'd hawker of holy things,

Whose ear is cramm'd with his cotton, and rings

Even in dreams to the chink of his pence,

This huckster put down war ! can he tell Whether war be a cause or a consequence ?

Put down the passions that make earth Hell !

Down with ambition, avarice, pride,
Jealousy, down ! cut off from the mind
The bitter springs of anger and fear ;
Down too, down at your own fireside,
With the evil tongue and the evil ear,
For each is at war with mankind.

IV

I wish I could hear again
The chivalrous battle-song
That she warbled alone in her joy !
I might persuade myself then
She would not do herself this great wrong,
To take a wanton dissolute boy
For a man and leader of men.

V

Ah God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple great ones gone
For ever and ever by,
One still strong man in a blatant land,
Whatever they call him, what care I,
Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one
Who can rule and dare not lie.

VI

And ah for a man to arise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be !

XI

I

O let the solid ground
Not fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet ;
Then let come what come may,
What matter if I go mad,
I shall have had my day.

II

Let the sweet heavens endure,
Not close and darken above me
Before I am quite quite sure
That there is one to love me ;
Then let come what come may
To a life that has been so sad,
I shall have had my day.

XII

I

Birds in the high Hall-garden
When twilight was falling,
Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
They were crying and calling.

II

Where was Maud ? in our wood ;
And I, who else, was with her,
Gathering woodland lilies,
Myriads blow together.

III

Birds in our wood sang
Ringing thro' the valleys,
Maud is here, here, here
In among the lilies.

IV

I kiss'd her slender hand,
She took the kiss sedately ;
Maud is not seventeen,
But she is tall and stately.

V

I to cry out on pride
Who have won her favour !
O Maud were sure of Heaven
If lowliness could save her.

VI

I know the way she went
Home with her maiden posy,
For her feet have touch'd the meadows
And left the daisies rosy.

VII

Birds in the high Hall-garden
Were crying and calling to her,
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud ?
One is come to woo her.

VIII

Look, a horse at the door,
And little King Charley snarling,
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling.

XIII

I

Scorn'd, to be scorn'd by one that I scorn,
Is that a matter to make me fret?
That a calamity hard to be borne?
Well, he may live to hate me yet.
Fool that I am to be vex'd with his pride!
I past him, I was crossing his lands;
He stood on the path a little aside;
His face, as I grant, in spite of spite,
Has a broad-blown comeliness, red and
white,
And six feet two, as I think, he stands;
But his essences turn'd the live air sick,
And barbarous opulence jewel-thick
Sunn'd itself on his breast and his hands.

II

Who shall call me ungentle, unfair,
I long'd so heartily then and there
To give him the grasp of fellowship;
But while I past he was humming an air,
Stopt, and then with a riding whip
Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,
And curving a contumelious lip,
Gorgonised me from head to foot
With a stony British stare.

III

Why sits he here in his father's chair?
That old man never comes to his place:
Shall I believe him ashamed to be seen?
For only once, in the village street,
Last year, I caught a glimpse of his face,
A gray old wolf and a lean.
Scarcely, now, would I call him a cheat;
For then, perhaps, as a child of deceit,
She might by a true descent be untrue;
And Maud is as true as Maud is sweet:
Tho' I fancy her sweetness only due
To the sweeter blood by the other side;
Her mother has been a thing complete,
However she came to be so allied.

And fair without, faithful within,
Maud to him is nothing akin:
Some peculiar mystic grace
Made her only the child of her mother,
And heap'd the whole inherited sin
On that huge scapegoat of the race,
All, all upon the brother.

IV

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be!
Has not his sister smiled on me?

XIV

I

Maud has a garden of roses
And lilies fair on a lawn;
There she walks in her state
And tends upon bed and bower,
And thither I climb'd at dawn
And stood by her garden-gate;
A lion ramps at the top,
He is claspt by a passion-flower.

II

Maud's own little oak-room
(Which Maud, like a precious stone
Set in the heart of the carven gloom,
Lights with herself, when alone
She sits by her music and books
And her brother lingers late
With a roystering company) looks
Upon Maud's own garden-gate:
And I thought as I stood, if a hand, as
white
As ocean-foam in the moon, were laid
On the hasp of the window, and my
Delight
Had a sudden desire, like a glorious ghost,
to glide,
Like a beam of the seventh Heaven, down
to my side,
There were but a step to be made.

III

The fancy flatter'd my mind,
And again seem'd overbold;
Now I thought that she cared for me,
Now I thought she was kind
Only because she was cold.

IV

I heard no sound where I stood
 But the rivulet on from the lawn
 Running down to my own dark wood ;
 Or the voice of the long sea-wave as it
 swell'd

Now and then in the dim-gray dawn ;
 But I look'd, and round, all round the
 house I beheld

The death-white curtain drawn ;
 Felt a horror over me creep,
 Prickle my skin and catch my breath,
 Knew that the death-white curtain meant
 but sleep,

Yet I shudder'd and thought like a fool
 of the sleep of death.

XV

So dark a mind within me dwells,
 And I make myself such evil cheer,
 That if I be dear to some one else,
 Then some one else may have much to
 fear ;

But if I be dear to some one else,
 Then I should be to myself more dear.

Shall I not take care of all that I think,
 Yea ev'n of wretched meat and drink,
 If I be dear,

If I be dear to some one else.

XVI

I

This lump of earth has left his estate
 The lighter by the loss of his weight ;
 And so that he find what he went to
 seek,

And fulsome Pleasure clog him, and
 drown

His heart in the gross mud-honey of town,
 He may stay for a year who has gone for
 a week :

But this is the day when I must speak,
 And I see my Oread coming down,
 O this is the day !

O beautiful creature, what am I

That I dare to look her way ;

Think I may hold dominion sweet,

Lord of the pulse that is lord of her breast,

And dream of her beauty with tender
 dread,

From the delicate Arab arch of her feet
 To the grace that, bright and light as the
 crest

Of a peacock, sits on her shining head,
 And she knows it not : O, if she knew it,
 To know her beauty might half undo it.
 I know it the one bright thing to save
 My yet young life in the wilds of Time,
 Perhaps from madness, perhaps from crime,
 Perhaps from a selfish grave.

II

What, if she be fasten'd to this fool lord,
 Dare I bid her abide by her word ?

Should I love her so well if she
 Had given her word to a thing so low ?

Shall I love her as well if she
 Can break her word were it even for me ?
 I trust that it is not so.

III

Catch not my breath, O clamorous heart,
 Let not my tongue be a thrall to my eye,
 For I must tell her before we part,
 I must tell her, or die.

XVII

Go not, happy day,
 From the shining fields,
 Go not, happy day,
 Till the maiden yields.

Rosy is the West,
 Rosy is the South,
 Roses are her cheeks,
 And a rose her mouth

When the happy Yes
 Falters from her lips,

Pass and blush the news
 Over glowing ships ;

Over blowing seas,
 Over seas at rest,

Pass the happy news,
 Blush it thro' the West ;

Till the red man dance
 By his red cedar-tree,

And the red man's babe
 Leap, beyond the sea.

Blush from West to East,
 Blush from East to West,
 Till the West is East,
 Blush it thro' the West.
 Rosy is the West,
 Rosy is the South,
 Roses are her cheeks,
 And a rose her mouth.

XVIII

I

I have led her home, my love, my only
 friend.
 There is none like her, none.
 And never yet so warmly ran my blood
 And sweetly, on and on
 Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,
 Full to the banks, close on the promised
 good.

None like her, none.
 Just now the dry-tongued laurels' patter-
 ing talk
 Seem'd her light foot along the garden
 walk,
 And shook my heart to think she comes
 once more ;
 But even then I heard her close the
 door,
 The gates of Heaven are closed, and she
 is gone.

III

There is none like her, none.
 Nor will be when our summers have
 deceased.
 O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
 In the long breeze that streams to thy
 delicious East,
 Sighing for Lebanon,
 Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here
 increased,
 Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
 And looking to the South, and fed
 With honey'd rain and delicate air,
 And haunted by the starry head
 Of her whose gentle will has changed my
 fate,

And made my life a perfumed altar-flame ;
 And over whom thy darkness must have
 spread
 With such delight as theirs of old, thy
 great
 Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
 Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from
 whom she came.

IV

Here will I lie, while these long branches
 sway,
 And you fair stars that crown a happy day
 Go in and out as if at merry play,
 Who am no more so all forlorn,
 As when it seem'd far better to be born
 To labour and the mattock-harden'd
 hand,
 Than nursed at ease and brought to
 understand
 A sad astrology, the boundless plan
 That makes you tyrants in your iron
 skies,
 Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
 Cold fires, yet with power to burn and
 brand
 His nothingness into man.

V

But now shine on, and what care I,
 Who in this stormy gulf have found a
 pearl
 The countercharm of space and hollow
 sky,
 And do accept my madness, and would die
 To save from some slight shame one
 simple girl.

VI

Would die ; for sullen-seeming Death
 may give
 More life to Love than is or ever was
 In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to
 live.
 Let no one ask me how it came to pass ;
 It seems that I am happy, that to me
 A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
 A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

VII

Not die ; but live a life of truest breath,
And teach true life to fight with mortal
wrongs.

O, why should Love, like men in drink-
ing-songs,

Spice his fair banquet with the dust of
death ?

Make answer, Maud my bliss,

Maud made my Maud by that long loving
kiss,

Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this ?
'The dusky strand of Death inwoven
here

With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself
more dear.'

VIII

Is that enchanted moan only the swell
Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay ?
And hark the clock within, the silver
knell

Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal
white,

And died to live, long as my pulses play ;
But now by this my love has closed her
sight

And given false death her hand, and stol'n
away

To dreamful wastes where footless fancies
dwell

Among the fragments of the golden day.
May nothing there her maiden grace
affright !

Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy
spell.

My bride to be, my evermore delight,
My own heart's heart, my ownest own,
farewell ;

It is but for a little space I go :
And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell
Beat to the noiseless music of the night !
Has our whole earth gone nearer to the
glow

Of your soft splendours that you look so
bright ?

I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell.
Beat, happy stars, timing with things
below,

Beat with my heart more blest than heart
can tell,

Blest, but for some dark undercurrent
woe

That seems to draw—but it shall not be
so :

Let all be well, be well.

XIX

I

Her brother is coming back to-night,
Breaking up my dream of delight.

II

My dream ? do I dream of bliss ?

I have walk'd awake with Truth.

O when did a morning shine

So rich in atonement as this

For my dark-dawning youth,

Darken'd watching a mother decline

And that dead man at her heart and
mine :

For who was left to watch her but I ?

Yet so did I let my freshness die.

III

I trust that I did not talk

To gentle Maud in our walk

(For often in lonely wanderings

I have cursed him even to lifeless things)

But I trust that I did not talk,

Not touch on her father's sin :

I am sure I did but speak

Of my mother's faded cheek

When it slowly grew so thin,

That I felt she was slowly dying

Vext with lawyers and harass'd with
debt :

For how often I caught her with eyes all
wet,

Shaking her head at her son and sighing

A world of trouble within !

IV

And Maud too, Maud was moved

To speak of the mother she loved

As one scarce less forlorn,

Dying abroad and it seems apart

From him who had ceased to share her
heart,

And ever mourning over the feud,
The household Fury sprinkled with blood
By which our houses are torn :
How strange was what she said,
When only Maud and the brother
Hung over her dying bed—
That Maud's dark father and mine
Had bound us one to the other,
Betrothed us over their wine,
On the day when Maud was born ;
Seal'd her mine from her first sweet
breath.

Mine, mine by a right, from birth till
death.

Mine, mine—our fathers have sworn.

v

But the true blood spilt had in it a heat
To dissolve the precious seal on a bond,
That, if left uncancell'd, had been so
sweet :

And none of us thought of a something
beyond,

A desire that awoke in the heart of the
child,

As it were a duty done to the tomb,
To be friends for her sake, to be reconciled ;

And I was cursing them and my doom,
And letting a dangerous thought run
wild

While often abroad in the fragrant gloom
Of foreign churches—I see her there,
Bright English lily, breathing a prayer
To be friends, to be reconciled !

vi

But then what a flint is he !
Abroad, at Florence, at Rome,
I find whenever she touch'd on me
This brother had laugh'd her down,
And at last, when each came home,
He had darken'd into a frown,
Chid her, and forbid her to speak
To me, her friend of the years before ;
And this was what had redden'd her
cheek

When I bow'd to her on the moor.

vii

Yet Maud, altho' not blind
To the faults of his heart and mind,
I see she cannot but love him,
And says he is rough but kind,
And wishes me to approve him,
And tells me, when she lay
Sick once, with a fear of worse,
That he left his wine and horses and play,
Sat with her, read to her, night and day,
And tended her like a nurse.

viii

Kind ? but the deathbed desire
Spurn'd by this heir of the liar—
Rough but kind ? yet I know
He has plotted against me in this,
That he plots against me still.
Kind to Maud ? that were not amiss.
Well, rough but kind ; why let it be so :
For shall not Maud have her will ?

ix

For, Maud, so tender and true,
As long as my life endures
I feel I shall owe you a debt,
That I never can hope to pay ;
And if ever I should forget
That I owe this debt to you
And for your sweet sake to yours ;
O then, what then shall I say ?—
If ever I *should* forget,
May God make me more wretched
Than ever I have been yet !

x

So now I have sworn to bury
All this dead body of hate,
I feel so free and so clear
By the loss of that dead weight,
That I should grow light-headed, I fear,
Fantastically merry ;
But that her brother comes, like a blight
On my fresh hope, to the Hall to-night.

xx

i

Strange, that I felt so gay,
Strange, that I tried to-day

To beguile her melancholy ;
 The Sultan, as we name him,—
 She did not wish to blame him—
 But he vexed her and perplexed her
 With his worldly talk and folly :
 Was it gentle to reprove her
 For stealing out of view
 From a little lazy lover
 Who but claims her as his due ?
 Or for chilling his caresses
 By the coldness of her manners,
 Nay, the plainness of her dresses ?
 Now I know her but in two,
 Nor can pronounce upon it
 If one should ask me whether
 The habit, hat, and feather,
 Or the frock and gipsy bonnet
 Be the neater and completer ;
 For nothing can be sweeter
 Than maiden Maud in either.

II

But to-morrow, if we live,
 Our ponderous squire will give
 A grand political dinner
 To half the squirelings near ;
 And Maud will wear her jewels,
 And the bird of prey will hover,
 And the titmouse hope to win her
 With his chirrup at her ear,

III

A grand political dinner
 To the men of many acres,
 A gathering of the Tory,
 A dinner and then a dance
 For the maids and marriage-makers,
 And every eye but mine will glance
 At Maud in all her glory.

IV

For I am not invited,
 But, with the Sultan's pardon,
 I am all as well delighted,
 For I know her own rose-garden,
 And mean to linger in it
 Till the dancing will be over ;
 And then, oh then, come out to me
 For a minute, but for a minute,

Come out to your own true lover,
 That your true lover may see
 Your glory also, and render
 All homage to his own darling,
 Queen Maud in all her splendour.

XXI

Rivulet crossing my ground,
 And bringing me down from the Hall
 This garden-rose that I found,
 Forgetful of Maud and me,
 And lost in trouble and moving round
 Here at the head of a tinkling fall,
 And trying to pass to the sea ;
 O Rivulet, born at the Hall,
 My Maud has sent it by thee
 (If I read her sweet will right)
 On a blushing mission to me,
 Saying in odour and colour, ' Ah, be
 Among the roses to-night.'

XXII

I

Come into the garden, Maud,
 For the black bat, night, has flown,
 Come into the garden, Maud,
 I am here at the gate alone ;
 And the woodbine spices are wafted
 abroad,
 And the musk of the rose is blown.

II

For a breeze of morning moves,
 And the planet of Love is on high,
 Beginning to faint in the light that she
 loves
 On a bed of daffodil sky,
 To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
 To faint in his light, and to die.

III

All night have the roses heard
 The flute, violin, bassoon ;
 All night has the casement jessamine
 stirr'd
 To the dancers dancing in tune ;
 Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
 And a hush with the setting moon.

IV

I said to the lily, 'There is but one
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play.'
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

V

I said to the rose, 'The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine,' so I swear to the
rose,
'For ever and ever, mine.'

VI

And the soul of the rose went into my
blood,
As the music clash'd in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to
the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

VII

From the meadow your walks have left
so sweet
That whenever a March-wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

VIII

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your
sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

IX

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with
curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.

X

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is
near';
And the white rose weeps, 'She is
late';
The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear';
And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'

XI

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

PART II

I

'THE fault was mine, the fault was
mine'—
Why am I sitting here so stunn'd and still,
Plucking the harmless wild-flower on the
hill?—
It is this guilty hand!—
And there rises ever a passionate cry
From underneath in the darkening land—
What is it, that has been done?
O dawn of Eden bright over earth and sky,
The fires of Hell brake out of thy rising
sun,
The fires of Hell and of Hate;

For she, sweet soul, had hardly spoken a
word,

When her brother ran in his rage to the
gate,

He came with the babe-faced lord ;
Heap'd on her terms of disgrace,
And while she wept, and I strove to be
cool,

He fiercely gave me the lie,
Till I with as fierce an anger spoke,
And he struck me, madman, over the
face,

Struck me before the languid fool,
Who was gaping and grinning by :
Struck for himself an evil stroke ;
Wrought for his house an irredeemable
woe ;

For front to front in an hour we stood,
And a million horrible bellowing echoes
broke

From the red-ribb'd hollow behind the
wood,

And thunder'd up into Heaven the Christ-
less code,

That must have life for a blow.

Ever and ever afresh they seem'd to grow.

Was it he lay there with a fading eye ?

'The fault was mine,' he whisper'd, 'fly!'

Then glided out of the joyous wood

The ghastly Wraith of one that I know ;

And there rang on a sudden a passionate
cry,

A cry for a brother's blood :

It will ring in my heart and my ears, till
I die, till I die.

II

Is it gone? my pulses beat—

What was it? a lying trick of the brain?

Yet I thought I saw her stand,

A shadow there at my feet,

High over the shadowy land.

It is gone; and the heavens fall in a
gentle rain,

When they should burst and drown with
deluging storms

The feeble vassals of wine and anger and
lust,

The little hearts that know not how to
forgive ;

Arise, my God, and strike, for we hold
Thee just,

Strike dead the whole weak race of
venomous worms,

That sting each other here in the dust ;
We are not worthy to live.

II

I

See what a lovely shell,
Small and pure as a pearl,
Lying close to my foot,
Frail, but a work divine,
Made so fairly well
With delicate spire and whorl,
How exquisitely minute,
A miracle of design !

II

What is it? a learned man
Could give it a clumsy name.
Let him name it who can,
The beauty would be the same.

III

The tiny cell is forlorn,
Void of the little living will
That made it stir on the shore.
Did he stand at the diamond door
Of his house in a rainbow frill?
Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,
A golden foot or a fairy horn
Thro' his dim water-world?

IV

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap
Of my finger-nail on the sand,
Small, but a work divine,
Frail, but of force to withstand,
Year upon year, the shock
Of cataract seas that snap
The three-decker's oaken spine
Athwart the ledges of rock,
Here on the Breton strand !

V

Breton, not Briton ; here
Like a shipwreck'd man on a coast
Of ancient fable and fear—

Plagued with a flitting to and fro,
 A disease, a hard mechanic ghost
 That never came from on high
 Nor ever arose from below,
 But only moves with the moving eye,
 Flying along the land and the main—
 Why should it look like Maud ?
 Am I to be overawed
 By what I cannot but know
 Is a juggle born of the brain ?

VI

Back from the Breton coast,
 Sick of a nameless fear,
 Back to the dark sea-line
 Looking, thinking of all I have lost ;
 An old song vexes my ear ;
 But that of Lamech is mine.

VII

For years, a measureless ill,
 For years, for ever, to part—
 But she, she would love me still ;
 And as long, O God, as she
 Have a grain of love for me,
 So long, no doubt, no doubt,
 Shall I nurse in my dark heart,
 However weary, a spark of will
 Not to be trampled out.

VIII

Strange, that the mind, when fraught
 With a passion so intense
 One would think that it well
 Might drown all life in the eye,—
 That it should, by being so overwrought,
 Suddenly strike on a sharper sense
 For a shell, or a flower, little things
 Which else would have been past by !
 And now I remember, I,
 When he lay dying there,
 I noticed one of his many rings
 (For he had many, poor worm) and
 thought
 It is his mother's hair.

IX

Who knows if he be dead ?
 Whether I need have fled ?

Am I guilty of blood ?
 However this may be,
 Comfort her, comfort her, all things
 good,
 While I am over the sea !
 Let me and my passionate love go by,
 But speak to her all things holy and
 high,
 Whatever happen to me !
 Me and my harmful love go by ;
 But come to her waking, find her asleep,
 Powers of the height, Powers of the
 deep,
 And comfort her tho' I die.

III

Courage, poor heart of stone !
 I will not ask thee why
 Thou canst not understand
 That thou are left for ever alone :
 Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—
 Or if I ask thee why,
 Care not thou to reply :
 She is but dead, and the time is at hand
 When thou shalt more than die.

IV

I

O that 'twere possible
 After long grief and pain
 To find the arms of my true love
 Round me once again !

II

When I was wont to meet her
 In the silent woody places
 By the home that gave me birth,
 We stood tranced in long embraces
 Mixt with kisses sweeter sweeter
 Than anything on earth.

III

A shadow flits before me,
 Not thou, but like to thee :
 Ah Christ, that it were possible
 For one short hour to see
 The souls we loved, that they might tell us
 What and where they be.

IV

It leads me forth at evening,
 It lightly winds and steals
 In a cold white robe before me,
 When all my spirit reels
 At the shouts, the leagues of lights,
 And the roaring of the wheels.

V

Half the night I waste in sighs,
 Half in dreams I sorrow after
 The delight of early skies ;
 In a wakeful doze I sorrow
 For the hand, the lips, the eyes,
 For the meeting of the morrow,
 The delight of happy laughter,
 The delight of low replies.

VI

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
 And a dewy splendour falls
 On the little flower that clings
 To the turrets and the walls ;
 'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
 And the light and shadow fleet ;
 She is walking in the meadow,
 And the woodland echo rings ;
 In a moment we shall meet ;
 She is singing in the meadow
 And the rivulet at her feet
 Ripples on in light and shadow
 To the ballad that she sings.

VII

Do I hear her sing as of old,
 My bird with the shining head,
 My own dove with the tender eye ?
 But there rings on a sudden a passionate
 cry,
 There is some one dying or dead,
 And a sullen thunder is roll'd ;
 For a tumult shakes the city,
 And I wake, my dream is fled ;
 In the shuddering dawn, behold,
 Without knowledge, without pity,
 By the curtains of my bed
 That abiding phantom cold.

VIII

Get thee hence, nor come again,
 Mix not memory with doubt,
 Pass, thou deathlike type of pain,
 Pass and cease to move about !
 'Tis the blot upon the brain
 That *will* show itself without.

IX

Then I rise, the eavedrops fall,
 And the yellow vapours choke
 The great city sounding wide ;
 The day comes, a dull red ball
 Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke
 On the misty river-tide.

X

Thro' the hubbub of the market
 I steal, a wasted frame,
 It crosses here, it crosses there,
 Thro' all that crowd confused and loud,
 The shadow still the same ;
 And on my heavy eyelids
 My anguish hangs like shame.

XI

Alas for her that met me,
 That heard me softly call,
 Came glimmering thro' the laurels
 At the quiet evenfall,
 In the garden by the turrets
 Of the old manorial hall.

XII

Would the happy spirit descend,
 From the realms of light and song,
 In the chamber or the street,
 As she looks among the blest,
 Should I fear to greet my friend
 Or to say ' Forgive the wrong,'
 Or to ask her, ' Take me, sweet,
 To the regions of thy rest ' ?

XIII

But the broad light glares and beats,
 And the shadow flits and fleets
 And will not let me be ;
 And I loathe the squares and streets,
 And the faces that one meets,
 Hearts with no love for me :

Always I long to creep
Into some still cavern deep,
There to weep, and weep, and weep
My whole soul out to thee.

V

I

Dead, long dead,
Long dead !
And my heart is a handful of dust,
And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain,
With never an end to the stream of passing
feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and
clatter,
And here beneath it is all as bad,
For I thought the dead had peace, but it
is not so ;
To have no peace in the grave, is that
not sad ?
But up and down and to and fro,
Ever about me the dead men go ;
And then to hear a dead man chatter
Is enough to drive one mad.

II

Wretchedest age, since Time began,
They cannot even bury a man ;
And tho' we paid our tithes in the days
that are gone,
Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was
read ;
It is that which makes us loud in the
world of the dead ;
There is none that does his work, not
one ;
A touch of their office might have
sufficed,
But the churchmen fain would kill their
church,
As the churches have kill'd their Christ.

III

See, there is one of us sobbing,
No limit to his distress ;
And another, a lord of all things, praying
To his own great self, as I guess ;
And another, a statesman there, betraying
His party-secret, fool, to the press ;
And yonder a vile physician, blabbing
The case of his patient—all for what ?
To tickle the maggot born in an empty
head,
And wheedle a world that loves him not,
For it is but a world of the dead.

IV

Nothing but idiot gabble !
For the prophecy given of old
And then not understood,
Has come to pass as foretold ;
Not let any man think for the public
good,
But babble, merely for babble.
For I never whisper'd a private affair
Within the hearing of cat or mouse,
No, not to myself in the closet alone,
But I heard it shouted at once from the
top of the house ;
Everything came to be known.
Who told *him* we were there ?

V

Not that gray old wolf, for he came not
back
From the wilderness, full of wolves, where
he used to lie ;
He has gather'd the bones for his o'er-
grown whelp to crack ;
Crack them now for yourself, and howl,
and die.

VI

Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,
And curse me the British vermin, the rat ;
I know not whether he came in the
Hanover ship,
But I know that he lies and listens mute
In an ancient mansion's crannies and
holes :

Arsenic, arsenic, sure, would do it,
 Except that now we poison our babes,
 poor souls !
 It is all used up for that.

VII

Tell him now : she is standing here at my
 head ;
 Not beautiful now, not even kind ;
 He may take her now ; for she never
 speaks her mind,
 But is ever the one thing silent here.
 She is not *of* us, as I divine ;
 She comes from another stiller world of
 the dead,
 Stiller, not fairer than mine.

VIII

But I know where a garden grows,
 Fairer than aught in the world beside,
 All made up of the lily and rose
 That blow by night, when the season is
 good,
 To the sound of dancing music and flutes :
 It is only flowers, they had no fruits,
 And I almost fear they are not roses, but
 blood ;
 For the keeper was one, so full of pride,
 He linkt a dead man there to a spectral
 bride ;
 For he, if he had not been a Sultan of
 brutes,
 Would he have that hole in his side ?

IX

But what will the old man say ?
 He laid a cruel snare in a pit
 To catch a friend of mine one stormy
 day ;
 Yet now I could even weep to think
 of it ;
 For what will the old man say
 When he comes to the second* corpse in
 the pit ?

X

Friend, to be struck by the public foe,
 Then to strike him and lay him low,
 That were a public merit, far,
 Whatever the Quaker holds, from sin ;
 But the red life spilt for a private blow—
 I swear to you, lawful and lawless war
 Are scarcely even akin.

XI

O me, why have they not buried me deep
 enough ?
 Is it kind to have made me a grave so
 rough ?
 Me, that was never a quiet sleeper ?
 Maybe still I am but half-dead ;
 Then I cannot be wholly dumb ;
 I will cry to the steps above my head
 And somebody, surely, some kind heart
 will come
 To bury me, bury me
 Deeper, ever so little deeper.

PART III

VI

I

My life has crept so long on a broken wing
 Thro' cells of madness, haunts of horror and fear,
 That I come to be grateful at last for a little thing :
 My mood is changed, for it fell at a time of year
 When the face of night is fair on the dewy downs,
 And the shining daffodil dies, and the Charioteer
 And starry Gemini hang like glorious crowns
 Over Orion's grave low down in the west,
 That like a silent lightning under the stars
 She seem'd to divide in a dream from a band of the blest,

And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming wars—
'And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble have rest,
Knowing I tarry for thee,' and pointed to Mars
As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast.

II

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear delight
To have look'd, tho' but in a dream, upon eyes so fair,
That had been in a weary world my one thing bright;
And it was but a dream, yet it lighten'd my despair
When I thought that a war would arise in defence of the right,
That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,
The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height,
Nor Britain's one sole God be the millionaire:
No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace
Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,
And watch her harvest ripen, her herd increase,
Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful shore,
And the cobweb woven across the cannon's throat
Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind no more.

III

And as months ran on and rumour of battle grew,
'It is time, it is time, O passionate heart,' said I
(For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and true),
'It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
That old hysterical mock-disease should die.'
And I stood on a giant deck and mix'd my breath
With a loyal people shouting a battle cry,
Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly
Far into the North, and battle, and seas of death.

IV

Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims
Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,
And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,
Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told;
And hail once more to the banner of battle unroll'd!
Tho' many a light shall darken, and many shall weep
For those that are crush'd in the clash of jarring claims,
Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant liar;
And many a darkness into the light shall leap,
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
And noble thought be freer under the sun,
And the heart of a people beat with one desire;
For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is over and done,
And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.

V

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind,
 We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still,
 And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind ;
 It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill ;
 I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
 I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd.

IDYLLS OF THE KING

IN TWELVE BOOKS

'*Flos Regum Arthurus*.'—JOSEPH OF EXETER.

DEDICATION

THESE to His Memory—since he held
 them dear,
 Perchance as finding there unconsciously
 Some image of himself—I dedicate,
 I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—
 These Idylls.

And indeed He seems to me
 Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,
 'Who revered his conscience as his
 king ;

Whose glory was, redressing human wrong ;
 Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd
 to it ;

Who loved one only and who clave to her—'
 Her—over all whose realms to their last
 isle,

Commingled with the gloom of imminent
 war,

The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,
 Darkening the world. We have lost
 him : he is gone :

We know him now : all narrow jealousies
 Are silent ; and we see him as he moved,
 How modest, kindly, all-accomplish'd,
 wise,

With what sublime repression of himself,
 And in what limits, and how tenderly ;

* Not swaying to this faction or to that ;
 Not making his high place the lawless
 perch

Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
 For pleasure ; but thro' all this tract of
 years

Wearing the white flower of a blameless
 life,

Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
 In that fierce light which beats upon a
 throne,

And blackens every blot : for where is he,
 Who dares foreshadow for an only son
 A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his !
 Or how should England dreaming of *his*
 sons

Hope more for these than some inheritance
 Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,
 Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
 Laborious for her people and her poor—
 Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—
 Far-sighted summoner of War and Waste
 To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—
 Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam
 Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,
 Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,
 Beyond all titles, and a household name,
 Hereafter, thro' all times, Albert the Good.

Break not, O woman's-heart, but still
 endure ;

Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure,
 Remembering all the beauty of that star
 Which shone so close beside Thee that
 ye made

One light together, but has past and leaves
 The Crown a lonely splendour.

May all love,
 His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,
 The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
 The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,
 The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
 Till God's love set Thee at his side again !

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LEODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other
child ;

And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land ;
And still from time to time the heathen
host

Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was
left.

And so there grew great tracts of wilder-
ness,

Wherein the beast was ever more and
more,

But man was less and less, till Arthur
came.

For first Aurelius lived and fought and
died,

And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom
one.

And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table
Round,

Drew all their petty principdoms under
him,

Their king and head, and made a realm,
and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was
waste,

Thick with wet woods, and many a beast
therein,

And none or few to scare or chase the
beast ;

So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and
bear

Came night and day, and rooted in the
fields,

And wallow'd in the gardens of the King.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal

The children and devour, but now and
then,

Her own brood lost or dead, lent her
fierce teat

To human sucklings ; and the children,
housed

In her foul den, there at their meat would
growl,

And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-
like men,

Worse than the wolves. And King
Leodogran

Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Cæsar's eagle : then his brother king,
Urien, assail'd him : last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth
with blood,

And on the spike that split the mother's
heart

Spitting the child, brake on him, till,
amazed,

He knew not whither he should turn for
aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly
crown'd,

Tho' not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, ' He is not Uther's son '—the
King

Sent to him, saying, ' Arise, and help us
thou !

For here between the man and beast we
die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of
arms,

But heard the call, and came : and
Guinevere

Stood by the castle walls to watch him
pass ;

But since he neither wore on helm or
shield

The golden symbol of his kinglihood,

But rode a simple knight among his
knights,

And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she
saw,

One among many, tho' his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life

Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and
pitch'd
His tents beside the forest. Then he
drave
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and
fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the
knight
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his
realm
Flash'd forth and into war: for most of
these,
Colleguing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying, 'Who
is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven
him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor
voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King;
This is the son of Anton, not the King.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle,
felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere;
And thinking as he rode, 'Her father said
That there between the man and beast
they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with
me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be
join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my
work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own
realm

Victor and lord. But were I join'd with
her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten
it,
And power on this dead world to make
it live.'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the
tale—
When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle
bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the
world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning star.
So when the King had set his banner
broad,
At once from either side, with trumpet-
blast,
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto
blood,
The long-lanced battle let their horses
run.
And now the Barons and the kings pre-
vail'd,
And now the King, as here and there
that war
Went swaying; but the Powers who walk
the world
Made lightnings and great thunders over
him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main
might,
And mightier of his hands with every
blow,
And leading all his knighthood threw the
kings
Carádos, Urien, Cradlemon of Wales,
Claudias, and Clariance of Northumber-
land,
The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved
and brake

Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the
brands
That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho ! they
yield !'

So like a painted battle the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.
Helaugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved
And honour'd most. 'Thou dost not
doubt me King,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me
to-day.'

'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of
God

Descends upon thee in the battle-field :
I know thee for my King !' Whereat the
two,

For each had warded either in the fight,
Swore on the field of death a deathless
love.

And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in
man :

Let chance what will, I trust thee to the
death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field
he sent

Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodo-
gran,

Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee
well,

Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in
heart

Debating—'How should I that am a
king,

However much he help me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son ?'—lifted his voice, and
call'd

A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel : 'Knowest thou aught of
Arthur's birth ?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and
said,

'Sir King, there be but two old men that
know :

And each is twice as old as I ; and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro' his magic art ; and one
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,
Who taught him magic ; but the scholar
ran

Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and
wrote

All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after-years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth.'

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share
of me :

But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfus, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the
King said,

'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser
fowl,

And reason in the chase : but wherefore
now

Do these your lords stir up the heat of
war,

Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
Others of Anton ? Tell me, ye your-
selves,

Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son ?'

And Ulfus and Brastias answer'd, 'Ay.'
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning,
spake—

For bold in heart and act and word was
he,

Whenever slander breathed against the
King—

'Sir, there be many rumours on this
head :

For there be those who hate him in their
hearts,

Call him baseborn, and since his ways are
sweet,

And theirs are bestial, hold him less than
man :

And there be those who deem him more
 than man,
 And dream he dropt from heaven: but
 my belief
 In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
 Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's
 time
 The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that
 held
 Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
 Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne:
 And daughters had she borne him,—one
 whereof,
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-
 cent,
 Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
 To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.
 And Uther cast upon her eyes of love:
 But she, a stainless wife to Gorlois,
 So loathed the bright dishonour of his
 love,
 That Gorlois and King Uther went to war:
 And overthrown was Gorlois and slain.
 Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
 Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
 Seeing the mighty swarm about their
 walls,
 Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,
 And there was none to call to but himself.
 So, compass'd by the power of the King,
 Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
 And with a shameful swiftness: after-
 ward,
 Not many moons, King Uther died him-
 self,
 Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
 After him, lest the realm should go to
 wrack.
 And that same night, the night of the new
 year,
 By reason of the bitterness and grief
 That vexed his mother, all before his time
 Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
 Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
 To Merlin, to be holden far apart
 Until his hour should come; because the
 lords
 Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
 Wild beasts, and surely would have torn
 the child

Piecemeal among them, had they known;
 for each
 But sought to rule for his own self and
 hand,
 And many hated Uther for the sake
 Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the
 child,
 And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
 And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
 Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him
 with her own;
 And no man knew. And ever since the
 lords
 Have foughten like wild beasts among
 themselves,
 So that the realm has gone to wrack:
 but now,
 This year, when Merlin (for his hour had
 come)
 Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the
 hall,
 Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your
 king,"
 A hundred voices cried, "Away with him!
 No king of ours! a son of Gorlois he,
 Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
 Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin thro' his
 craft,
 And while the people clamour'd for a king,
 Had Arthur crown'd; but after, the great
 lords
 Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the King debated with
 himself
 If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
 Or born the son of Gorlois, after death,
 Or Uther's son, and born before his
 time,
 Or whether there were truth in anything
 Said by these three, there came to Came-
 liard,
 With Gawain and young Modred, her two
 sons,
 Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-
 cent;
 Whom as he could, not as he would, the
 King
 Made feast for, saying, as they sat at
 meat

'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.
 Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men
 Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—
 So many those that hate him, and so strong,
 So few his knights, however brave they be—
 Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee: few,
 Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;
 For I was near him when the savage yells
 Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
 Crown'd on the dais, and his warriors cried,
 "Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
 Who love thee." Then the King in low deep tones,
 And simple words of great authority,
 Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
 That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
 Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
 Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
 Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake and cheer'd his
 Table Round
 With large, divine, and comfortable words,
 Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld
 From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
 A momentary likeness of the King:
 And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross
 And those around it and the Crucified,
 Down from the casement over Arthur,
 smote
 Flame-colour, vert and azure, in three rays,
 One falling upon each of three fair queens,
 Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends

Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
 Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose
 vast wit
 And hundred winters are but as the hands
 Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

'And near him stood the Lady of the
 Lake,
 Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
 She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,
 Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
 Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
 Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
 But there was heard among the holy hymns
 A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
 Down in a deep; calm, whatsoever storms
 May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,
 Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

'There likewise I beheld Excalibur
 Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
 That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
 And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich
 With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
 Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
 That men are blinded by it—on one side,
 Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
 "Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,
 And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
 "Cast me away!" And sad was Arthur's face
 Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
 "Take thou and strike! the time to cast away

Is yet far-off." So this great brand the
king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen
down.'

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but
thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister'; and she said,
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I';
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask'd
the King.

She answer'd, 'These be secret things,'
and sign'd

To those two sons to pass, and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw:
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard; the same that
afterward

Struck for the throne, and striking found
his doom.

And then the Queen made answer,
'What know I?

For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark
Was Gorlois, yea and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness; but this King is
fair

Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the
world."

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye
such a cry?

But when did Arthur chance upon thee
first?'

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell
thee true:

He found me first when yet a little maid:
Beaten I had been for a little fault

Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of
heath,

And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead;
and he—

I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say,
can walk

Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted
my heart,

And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him
was I,

Stern too at times, and then I loved him
not,

But sweet again, and then I loved him
well.

And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for
me,

For then I surely thought he would be
king.

'But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they
say,

Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the
mage;

And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the King,
Uther, before he died; and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away

Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to
breathe,

Then from the castle gateway by the
chasm

Descending thro' the dismal night—a
night

In which the bounds of heaven and earth
were lost—

Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape
thereof

A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to
 stern
 Bright with a shining people on the decks,
 And gone as soon as seen. And then
 the two
 Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great
 sea fall,
 Wave after wave, each mightier than the
 last,
 Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the
 deep
 And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
 Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame :
 And down the wave and in the flame was
 borne
 A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
 Who stoopt and caught the babe, and
 cried "The King !
 Here is an heir for Uther !" And the
 fringe
 Of that great breaker, sweeping up the
 strand,
 Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
 And all at once all round him rose in fire,
 So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
 And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
 Free sky and stars : "And this same
 child," he said,
 "Is he who reigns ; nor could I part in
 peace
 Till this were told." And saying this the
 seer
 Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of
 death,
 Not ever to be question'd any more
 Save on the further side ; but when I met
 Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were
 truth—
 The shining dragon and the naked child
 Descending in the glory of the seas—
 He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
 In riddling triplets of old time, and said :

 " "Rain, rain, and sun ! a rainbow in
 the sky !
 A young man will be wiser by and by ;
 An old man's wit may wander ere he die.
 Rain, rain, and sun ! a rainbow on the
 lea !
 And truth is this to me, and that to thee ;

And truth or clothed or naked let it be.
 Rain, sun, and rain ! and the free
 blossom blows :
 Sun, rain, and sun ! and where is he
 who knows ?
 From the great deep to the great deep
 he goes."

'So Merlin riddling anger'd me ; but
 thou
 Fear not to give this King thine only child,
 Guinevere : so great bards of him will sing
 Hereafter ; and dark sayings from of old
 Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of
 men,
 And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
 For comfort after their wage-work is done,
 Speak of the King ; and Merlin in our
 time
 Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
 Tho' men may wound him that he will
 not die,
 But pass, again to come ; and then or now
 Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
 Till these and all men hail him for their
 king.'

Shespaek and King Leodogran rejoiced,
 But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay ?'
 Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept,
 and saw,
 Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
 Field after field, up to a height, the peak
 Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom
 king,
 Now looming, and now lost ; and on the
 slope
 The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd
 was driven,
 Fire glimpsed ; and all the land from
 roof and rick,
 In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
 Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with
 the haze
 And made it thicker ; while the phantom
 king
 Sent out at times a voice ; and here or there
 Stood one who pointed toward the voice,
 the rest
 Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of
 ours,

No son of Uther, and no king of ours';
 Till with a wink his dream was changed,
 the haze
 Descended, and the solid earth became
 As nothing, but the King stood out in
 heaven,
 Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and
 sent
 Ulfus, and Brastias and Bedivere,
 Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom
 he loved
 And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride
 forth
 And bring the Queen ;—and watch'd him
 from the gates :
 And Lancelot past away among the
 flowers,
 (For then was latter April) and return'd
 Among the flowers, in May, with Guine-
 vere.
 To whom arrived, by Dubric the high
 saint,
 Chief of the church in Britain, and before
 The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the
 King
 That morn was married, while in stainless
 white,
 The fair beginners of a nobler time,
 And glorying in their vows and him, his
 knights
 Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
 Far shone the fields of May thro' open
 door,
 The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,
 The Sun of May descended on their King,
 They gazed on all earth's beauty in their
 Queen,
 Roll'd incense, and there past along the
 hymns
 A voice as of the waters, while the two
 Swore at the shrine of Christ a deathless
 love :
 And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is
 mine.
 Let chance what will, I love thee to the
 death !'
 To whom the Queen replied with drooping
 eyes,

'King and my lord, I love thee to the
 death !'
 And holy Dubric spread his hands and
 spake,
 'Reign ye, and live and love, and make
 the world
 Other, and may thy Queen be one with
 thee,
 And all this Order of thy Table Round
 Fulfil the boundless purpose of their
 King !'

So Dubric said ; but when they left the
 shrine
 Great Lords from Rome before the portal
 stood,
 In scornful stillness gazing as they past ;
 Then while they paced a city all on fire
 With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets
 blew,
 And Arthur's knighthood sang before the
 King :—

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white
 with May ;
 Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd
 away !
 Blow thro' the living world—"Let the
 King reign."

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in
 Arthur's realm ?
 Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon
 helm,
 Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the
 King reign.

'Strike for the King and live ! his
 knights have heard
 That God hath told the King a secret
 word.
 Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the
 King reign.

'Blow trumpet ! he will lift us from
 the dust.
 Blow trumpet ! live the strength and die
 the lust !
 Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let
 the King reign.

'Strike for the King and die! and if
thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the
highest.
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let
the King reign.

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his
May!
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let
the King reign.

'The King will follow Christ, and we
the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret
thing.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the
King reign.'

Sosang the knighthood, moving to their
hall.
There at the banquet those great Lords
from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in, and claim'd their tribute as of
yore.

But Arthur spake, 'Behold, for these have
sworn
To wage my wars, and worship me their
King;
The old order changeth, yielding place
to new;
And we that fight for our fair father
Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and
old
To drive the heathen from your Roman
wall,
No tribute will we pay': so those great
lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove
with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a
space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength
the King
Drew in the petty principedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles over-
came
The heathen hordes, and made a realm
and reign'd.

THE ROUND TABLE

GARETH AND LYNETTE.
THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.
GERAINT AND ENID.
BALIN AND BALAN.
MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.
THE HOLY GRAIL.
PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.
THE LAST TOURNAMENT.
GUINEVERE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE

The last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted
Pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.
'How he went down,' said Gareth, 'as
a false knight
Or evil king before my lance if lance
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—
And yet thou art but swollen with cold
snows
And mine is living blood: thou dost His
will,

The Maker's, and not knowest, and I
that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good
mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and
whistled to—
Since the good mother holds me still a
child!
Good mother is bad mother unto me!
A worse were better; yet no worse
would I.
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put
force
To weary her ears with one continuous
prayer,

Until she let me fly disaged to sweep
In ever-highering eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence
swoop

Down upon all things base, and dash
them dead,

A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain,
when he came

With Modred hither in the summertime,
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven
knight.

Modred for want of worthier was the
judge.

Then I so shook him in the saddle, he
said,

"Thou hast half prevail'd against me,"
said so—he—

Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is alway sullen : what care I ?

And Gareth went, and hovering round
her chair

Ask'd, 'Mother, tho' ye count me still
the child,

Sweet mother, do ye love the child?'
She laugh'd,

'Thou art but a wild-geese to question
it.'

'Then, mother, an ye love the child,' he
said,

'Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story.' 'Yea, my well-
beloved,

An 'twere but of the goose and golden
eggs.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling
eyes,

'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of
mine

Was finer gold than any goose can lay ;
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid

Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.

And there was ever haunting round the
palm

A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw
The splendour sparkling from aloft, and
thought

"An I could climb and lay my hand upon
it,

Then were I wealthier than a leash of
kings."

But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,
One, that had loved him from his child-

hood, caught

And stay'd him, "Climb not lest thou
break thy neck,

I charge thee by my love," and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake

his neck,

But brake his very heart in pining for it,
And past away.'

To whom the mother said,

'True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself
and climb'd,

And handed down the golden treasure to
him.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling
eyes,

'Gold? said I gold?—ay then, why he,
or she,

Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world
Had ventured—*had* the thing I spake of

been

Mere gold—but this was all of that true
steel,

Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur,
And lightnings play'd about it in the

storm,

And all the little fowl were flurried at it,
And there were cries and clashings in the

nest,

That sent him from his senses : let me go.'

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and
said,

'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth

Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd
out !

For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought against him in the Barons' war,

And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies

there

A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburialable,

No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks,
nor knows.

And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
Albeit neither loved with that full love
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love:
Stay therefore thou; red berries charm
the bird,

And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the
wars,

Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
Of wrench'd or broken limb—an often
chance

In those brain-stunning shocks, and
tourney-falls,

Frights to my heart; but stay: follow
the deer

By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns;
So make thy manhood mightier day by
day;

Sweet is the chase: and I will seek thee
out

Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace
Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone
year,

Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness
I know not thee, myself, nor anything.
Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy
than man.'

Then Gareth, 'An ye hold me yet for
child,

Hear yet once more the story of the child.
For, mother, there was once a King, like
ours.

The prince his heir, when tall and
marriageable,

Ask'd for a bride; and thereupon the
King

Set two before him. One was fair,
strong, arm'd—

But to be won by force—and many men
Desired her; one, good lack, no man
desired.

And these were the conditions of the
King:

That save he won the first by force, he
needs

Must wed that other, whom no man
desired,

A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,

That evermore she long'd to hide herself,
Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—
Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died
of her.

And one—they call'd her Fame; and
one,—O Mother,

How can ye keep me tether'd to you—
Shame.

Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the
King,

Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow
the King—

Else, wherefore born?'

To whom the mother said,

'Sweet son, for there be many who deem
him not,

Or will not deem him, wholly proven
King—

Albeit in mine own heart I knew him
King,

When I was frequent with him in my
youth,

And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted
him

No more than he, himself; but felt him
mine,

Of closest kin to me: yet—wilt thou leave
Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine
all,

Life, limbs, for one that is not proven
King?

Stay, till the cloud that settles round his
birth

Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answer'd quickly, 'Not
an hour,

So that ye yield me—I will walk thro'
fire,

Mother, to gain it—your full leave to
go.

Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd
Rome

From off the threshold of the realm, and
crush'd

The Idolaters, and made the people free?
Who should be King save him who
makes us free?'

So when the Queen, who long had
sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which
he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
She answer'd craftily, 'Will ye walk thro'
fire?

Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the
smoke.

Ay, go then, an ye must: only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee
knight,

Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother,—I demand.'

And Gareth cried,
'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.

Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to
the quick!'

But slowly spake the mother looking
at him,

'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to
Arthur's hall,

And hire thyself to serve for meats and
drinks

Among the scullions and the kitchen-
knaves,

And those that hand the dish across the
bar.

Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone.

And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and
a day.'

For so the Queen believed that when
her son

Beheld his only way to glory lead

Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,

Her own true Gareth was too princely-
proud

To pass thereby; so should he rest with
her,

Closed in her castle from the sound of
arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,

'The thrall in person may be free in soul,

And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,

And since thou art my mother, must
obey.

I therefore yield me freely to thy will;

For hence will I, disguised, and hire my-
self

To serve with scullions and with kitchen-
knaves;

Nor tell my name to any—no, not the
King.'

Gareth awhile linger'd. The mother's
eye

Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he
turn'd,

Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour,
When waken'd by the wind which with
full voice

Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to
dawn,

He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his
birth,

Before the wakeful mother heard him,
went.

The three were clad like tillers of the
soil.

Southward they set their faces. The birds
made

Melody on branch, and melody in mid air.
The damp hill-slopes were quicken'd into

green,

And the live green had kindled into
flowers,

For it was past the time of Easterday.

So, when their feet were planted on
the plain

That broaden'd toward the base of Came-
lot,

Far off they saw the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the Royal

mount,

That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city

flash'd;

At times the spires and turrets half-way
down

Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great
gate shone

Only, that open'd on the field below:
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.

Then those who went with Gareth were
amazed,
One crying, 'Let us go no further, lord.
Here is a city of Enchanters, built
By fairy Kings.' The second echo'd him,
'Lord, we have heard from our wise man
at home
To Northward, that this King is not the
King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland,
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
And Merlin's glamour.' Then the first
again,
'Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision.'

Gareth answer'd them
With laughter, swearing he had glamour
enow
In his own blood, his principedom, youth
and hopes,
To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea ;
So push'd them all unwilling toward the
gate.
And there was no gate like it under
heaven.
For barefoot on the keystone, which was
lined
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake stood : all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away ;
But like the cross her great and goodly
arms
Stretch'd under all the cornice and
upheld :
And drops of water fell from either hand ;
And down from one a sword was hung,
from one
A censer, either worn with wind and
storm ;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish ;
And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
Were giddy gazing there ; and over all
High on the top were those three Queens,
the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his
need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a
space
Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd
The dragon-boughts and elvish emblem-
ings
Began to move, seethe, twine and curl :
they call'd
To Gareth, 'Lord, the gateway is alive.'

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his
eyes
So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to
move.
Out of the city a blast of music peal'd.
Back from the gate started the three, to
whom
From out thereunder came an ancient
man,
Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my
sons ?'

Then Gareth, 'We be tillers of the soil,
Who leaving share in furrow come to see
The glories of our King : but these, my
men,
(Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)
Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
From Fairyland ; and whether this be built
By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens ;
Or whether there be any city at all,
Or all a vision : and this music now
Hath scared them both, but tell thou
these the truth.'

Then that old Seer made answer play-
ing on him
And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good
ship sail
Keel upward, and mast downward, in
the heavens,
And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air :
And here is truth ; but an it please thee
not,
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it
me.
For truly as thou sayest, a Fairy King
And Fairy Queens have built the city, son ;
They came from out a sacred mountain-
cleft
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in
hand,

And built it to the music of their harps.
And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King ; tho' some there be that
hold

The King a shadow, and the city real :
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou
pass

Beneath this archway, then wilt thou
become

A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the
which

No man can keep ; but, so thou dread to
swear,

Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without, among the cattle of the field,
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is
built

To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.'

Gareth spake
Anger'd, 'Old Master, reverence thine
own beard
That looks as white as utter truth, and
seems

Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall !
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath
been

To thee fair-spoken ?'

But the Seer replied,
'Know ye not then the Riddling of the
Bards ?

"Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion" ?
I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,
And all that see thee, for thou art not who
Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou
art.

And now thou goest up to mock the King,
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie.'

Unmockingly the mocker ending here
Turn'd to the right, and past along the
plain ;

Whom Gareth looking after said, 'My
men,

Our one white lie sits like a little ghost
Here on the threshold of our enterprise.
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I :
Well, we will make amends.'

With all good cheer
He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with
his twain

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in
stone ;

Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at
Arthur's court,

Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and every-
where

At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening
peak

And pinnacle, and had made it spire to
heaven.

And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall : his arms
Clash'd ; and the sound was good to
Gareth's ear.

And out of bower and casement shyly
glanced

Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of
love ;

And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall
The splendour of the presence of the
King

Throned, and delivering doom—and
look'd no more—

But felt his young heart hammering in his
ears,

And thought, 'For this half-shadow of a
lie

The truthful King will doom me when I
speak.'

Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw nor one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights, that ranged about
the throne,

Clear honour shining like the dewy star

Of dawn, and faith in their great King,
with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain.

Then came a widow crying to the King,
'A boon, Sir King ! Thy father, Uther,
reft
From my dead lord a field with violence :
For howsø'er at first he proffer'd gold,
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,
We yielded not ; and then he reft us of it
Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field.'

Said Arthur, 'Whether would ye?
gold or field?'
To whom the woman weeping, 'Nay, my
lord,
The field was pleasant in my husband's
eye.'

And Arthur, 'Have thy pleasant field
again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use
thereof,
According to the years. No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true.
Accursed, who from the wrongs his father
did
Would shape himself a right !'

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King ! Thine enemy, King,
am I.
With thine own hand thou slewest my
dear lord,
A knight of Uther in the Barons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and
fought
Against thee, saying thou wert basely
born.
I held with these, and loathe to ask thee
aught.
Yet lo ! my husband's brother had my
son
Thrall'd in his castle, and hath starved
him dead ;
And standeth seized of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left
the son.

So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle
for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my
son.'

Then strode a good knight forward,
crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King ! I am her kinsman, I.
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the
man.'

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and
cried,
'A boon, Sir King ! ev'n that thou grant
her none,
This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full
hall—
None ; or the wholesome boon of gyve
and gag.'

But Arthur, 'We sit King, to help the
wrong'd
Thro' all our realm. The woman loves
her lord.
Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and
hates !
The kings of old had doom'd thee to the
flames,
Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee
dead,
And Uther slit thy tongue : but get thee
hence—
Lest that rough humour of the kings of
old
Return upon me ! Thou that art her kin,
Go likewise ; lay him low and slay him
not,
But bring him here, that I may judge the
right,
According to the justice of the King :
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man
shall die.'

Then came in hall the messenger of
Mark,
A name of evil savour in the land,
The Cornish king. In either hand he
bore
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as
shines

A field of charlock in the sudden sun
 Between two showers, a cloth of palest
 gold,
 Which down he laid before the throne,
 and knelt,
 Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,
 Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot ;
 For having heard that Arthur of his grace
 Had made his goodly cousin, Tristram,
 knight,
 And, for himself was of the greater state,
 Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord
 Would yield him this large honour all the
 more ;
 So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of
 gold,
 In token of true heart and fealty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to
 rend
 In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.
 An oak-tree smoulder'd there. 'The
 goodly knight !
 What ! shall the shield of Mark stand
 among these ?'
 For, midway down the side of that long
 hall
 A stately pile,—whereof along the front,
 Some blazon'd, some but carven, and
 some blank,
 There ran a treble range of stony
 shields,—
 Rose, and high-arching overbrow'd the
 hearth.
 And under every shield a knight was
 named :
 For this was Arthur's custom in his hall ;
 When some good knight had done one
 noble deed,
 His arms were carven only ; but if twain
 His arms were blazon'd also ; but if none,
 The shield was blank and bare without a
 sign
 Saving the name beneath ; and Gareth
 saw
 The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and
 bright,
 And Modred's blank as death ; and
 Arthur cried
 To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.

'More like are we to reave him of his
 crown
 Than make him knight because men call
 him king.
 The kings we found, ye know we stay'd
 their hands
 From war among themselves, but left
 them kings ;
 Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,
 Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them
 we enroll'd
 Among us, and they sit within our hall.
 But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name
 of king,
 As Mark would sully the low state of churl :
 And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
 Return, and meet, and hold him from
 our eyes,
 Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,
 Silenced for ever—craven—a man of
 plots,
 Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside am-
 bushings—
 No fault of thine : let Kay the seneschal
 Look to thy wants, and send thee satis-
 fied—
 Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand
 be seen !'

And many another suppliant crying
 came
 With noise of ravage wrought by beast
 and man,
 And evermore a knight would ride away.

Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily
 Down on the shoulders of the twain, his
 men,
 Approach'd between them toward the
 King, and ask'd,
 'A boon, Sir King (his voice was all
 ashamed),
 For see ye not how weak and hungerworn
 I seem—leaning on these? grant me to
 serve
 For meat and drink among thy kitchen-
 knaves
 A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my
 name.
 Hereafter I will fight.'

To him the King,
 'A goodly youth and worth a goodlier
 boon!
 But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must
 Kay,
 The master of the meats and drinks, be
 thine.'

He rose and past; then Kay, a man
 of mien
 Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself
 Root-bitten by white lichen,

'Lo ye now!
 This fellow hath broken from some Abbey,
 where,
 God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,
 However that might chance! but an he
 work,
 Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
 And sleeker shall he shine than any hog.'

Then Lancelot standing near, 'Sir
 Seneschal,
 Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray,
 and all the hounds;
 A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost
 not know:
 Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine,
 High nose, a nostril large and fine, and
 hands
 Large, fair and fine!—Some young lad's
 mystery—
 But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
 Is noble-natured. Treat him with all
 grace,
 Lest he should come to shame thy judging
 of him.'

Then Kay, 'What murrurest thou of
 mystery?
 Think ye this fellow will poison the
 King's dish?
 Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!
 Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd
 For horse and armour: fair and fine,
 forsooth!
 Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see
 thou to it
 That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some
 fine day
 Undo thee not—and leave my man to me.'

So Gareth all for glory underwent
 The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage;
 Ate with young lads his portion by the
 door,
 And couch'd at night with grimy kitchen-
 knaves.
 And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
 But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,
 Would hustle and harry him, and labour
 him
 Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
 To turn the broach, draw water, or hew
 wood,
 Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bow'd
 himself
 With all obedience to the King, and
 wrought
 All kind of service with a noble ease
 That graced the lowliest act in doing it.
 And when the thralls had talk among
 themselves,
 And one would praise the love that linkt
 the King
 And Lancelot—how the King had saved
 his life
 In battle twice, and Lancelot once the
 King's—
 For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,
 But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field—
 Gareth was glad. Or if some other told,
 How once the wandering forester at dawn,
 Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas,
 On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King,
 A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,
 'He passes to the Isle Avilion,
 He passes and is heal'd and cannot die'—
 Gareth was glad. But if their talk were
 foul,
 Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
 Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud
 That first they mock'd, but, after, rever-
 enced him.
 Or Gareth telling some prodigious tale
 Of knights, who sliced a red life-bubbling
 way
 Thro' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
 All in a gap-mouth'd circle his good mates
 Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,
 Charm'd; till Sir Kay, the seneschal,
 would come

Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind
Among dead leaves, and drive them all
apart.

Or when the thralls had sport among
themselves,

So there were any trial of mastery,
He, by two yards in casting bar or stone
Was counted best ; and if there chanced
a joust,

So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would hurry thither, and when he saw
the knights

Clash like the coming and retiring wave,
And the spear spring, and good horse
reel, the boy

Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

So for a month he wrought among the
thralls ;

But in the weeks that follow'd, the good
Queen,

Repentant of the word she made him
swear,

And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in-crescent and de-crescent
moon,

Arms for her son, and loosed him from
his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of
Lot

With whom he used to play at tourney
once,

When both were children, and in lonely
haunts

Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth
joy.

He laugh'd ; he sprang. ' Out of the
smoke, at once

I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—
These news be mine, none other's—nay,
the King's—

Descend into the city ' : whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him
all.

' I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in
a tilt

For pastime ; yea, he said it : joust can I.

Make me thy knight—in secret ! let my
name

Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I
spring

Like flame from ashes.'

Here the King's calm eye
Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush,
and bow

Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd
him,

' Son, the good mother let me know thee
here,

And sent her wish that I would yield thee
thine.

Make thee my knight ? my knights are
sworn to vows

Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King.'

Then Gareth, lightly springing from
his knees,

' My King, for hardihood I can promise
thee.

For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
No mellow master of the meats and
drinks !

And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing.'

And the King—
' Make thee my knight in secret ? yea,
but he,

Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must
know.'

' Let Lancelot know, my King, let
Lancelot know,
Thy noblest and thy truest !'

And the King—
' But wherefore would ye men should
wonder at you ?

Nay, rather for the sake of me, their
King,

And the deed's sake my knighthood do
the deed,

Than to be noised of.'

Merrily Gareth ask'd,
'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking
of it?

Let be my name until I make my name !
My deeds will speak : it is but for a day.'
So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
Smiled the great King, and half-unwill-
ingly

Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to
him.

Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,
'I have given him the first quest : he is
not proven.

Look therefore when he calls for this in
hall,

Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor
slain.'

Then that same day there past into the
hall

A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-
blossom,

Hawk-eyes ; and lightly was her slender
nose

Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower ;
She into hall past with her page and cried,

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe
without,

See to the foe within ! bridge, ford, beset
By bandits, everyone that owns a tower
The Lord for half a league. Why sit ye
there ?

Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were
king,

Till ev'n the lonest hold were all as free
From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar-
cloth

From that best blood it is a sin to spill.'

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur, 'I nor
mine

Rest : so my knighthood keep the vows
they swore,

The wastest moorland of our realm shall
be

Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.
What is thy name ? thy need ?'

'My name?' she said—
'Lynette my name ; noble ; my need, a
knight

To combat for my sister, Lyonors,
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
And comely, yea, and comelier than my-
self.

She lives in Castle Perilous : a river
Runs in three loops about her living-
place ;

And o'er it are three passings, and three
knights

Defend the passings, brethren, and a
fourth

And of that four the mightiest, holds her
stay'd

In her own castle, and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with
him :

And but delays his purport till thou send
To do the battle with him, thy chief man
Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,
Then wed, with glory : but she will not
wed

Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot.'

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,
'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to
crush

All wrongers of the Realm. But say, these
four,

Who be they ? What the fashion of the
men ?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old knight-errantry
Who ride abroad, and do but what they
will ;

Courteous or bestial from the moment,
such

As have nor law nor king ; and three of
these

Proud in their fantasy call themselves the
Day,

Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Even-
ing-Star,

Being strong fools ; and never a whit more
wise

The fourth, who alway rideth arm'd in
black,

A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
 He names himself the Night and oftener
 Death,
 And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
 And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
 To show that who may slay or scape the
 three,
 Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.
 And all these four befools, but mighty men,
 And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he
 rose,
 A head with kindling eyes above the
 throng,
 'A boon, Sir King—this quest!' then—
 for he mark'd
 Kay near him groaning like a wounded
 bull—
 'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-
 knave am I,
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks
 am I,
 And I can topple over a hundred such.
 Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing
 at him,
 Brought down a momentary brow.
 'Rough, sudden,
 And pardonable, worthy to be knight—
 Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame,
 pride, wrath
 Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,
 'Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief
 knight,
 And thou hast given me but a kitchen-
 knave.'
 Then ere a man in hall could stay her,
 turn'd,
 Fled down the lane of access to the King,
 Took horse, descended the slope street,
 and past
 The weird white gate, and paused without,
 beside
 The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-
 knave.'

Now two great entries open'd from the
 hall,
 At one end one, that gave upon a range

Of level pavement where the King would
 pace
 At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
 And down from this a lordly stairway
 sloped
 Till lost in blowing trees and tops of
 towers;
 And out by this main doorway past the
 King.
 But one was counter to the hearth, and
 rose
 High that the highest-crested helm could
 ride
 Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry
 fled
 The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
 Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the
 door
 King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a
 town,
 A warhorse of the best, and near it stood
 The two that out of north had follow'd
 him:
 This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that
 held
 The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth
 loosed
 A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to
 heel,
 A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
 And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,
 That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and
 flash'd as those
 Dull-coated things, that making slide
 apart
 Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there
 burns
 A jewel'd harness, ere they pass and fly.
 So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.
 Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the
 shield
 And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of
 grain
 Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and
 tipt
 With trenchant steel, around him slowly
 prest
 The people, while from out of kitchen came
 The thralls in throng, and seeing who had
 work'd

Lustier than any, and whom they could
 but love,
 Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and
 cried,
 'God bless the King, and all his fellow-
 ship !'
 And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
 Down the slope street, and past without
 the gate.

So Gareth past with joy ; but as the cur
 Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his
 cause
 Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being
 named,
 His owner, but remembers all, and growls
 Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door
 Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used
 To harry and hustle.

'Bound upon a quest
 With horse and arms—the King hath past
 his time—
 My scullion knave ! Thralls to your work
 again,
 For an your fire be low ye kindle mine !
 Will there be dawn in West and eve in
 East ?
 Begone !—my knave !—belike and like
 enow
 Some old head-blow not heeded in his
 youth
 So shook his wits they wander in his
 prime—
 Crazed ! How the villain lifted up his
 voice,
 Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-
 knave.
 Tut : he was tame and meek enow with
 me,
 Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing.
 Well—I will after my loud knave, and
 learn
 Whether he know me for his master yet.
 Out of the smoke he came, and so my
 lance
 Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the
 mire—
 Thence, if the King awoken from his craze,
 Into the smoke again.'

But Lancelot said,
 'Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the
 King,
 For that did never he whereon ye rail,
 But ever meekly served the King in thee ?
 Abide : take counsel ; for this lad is great
 And lusty, and knowing both of lance and
 sword.'
 'Tut, tell not me,' said Kay, 'ye are
 overfine
 To mar stout knaves with foolish cour-
 tesies' :
 Then mounted, on thro' silent faces rode
 Down the slope city, and out beyond the
 gate.

But by the field of tourney lingering yet
 Mutter'd the damsel, 'Wherefore did the
 King
 Scorn me ? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt,
 at least
 He might have yielded to me one of those
 Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
 Rather than—O sweet heaven ! O fie
 upon him—
 His kitchen-knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth drew
 (And there were none but few goodlier
 than he)
 Shining in arms, 'Damsel, the quest is mine.
 Lead, and I follow.' She thereat, as one
 That smells a foul-flesh'd agaric in the
 holt,
 And deems it carrion of some woodland
 thing,
 Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose
 With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling,
 'Hence !
 Avoid, thou smell'st all of kitchen-grease.
 And look who comes behind,' for there
 was Kay.
 'Knowest thou not me ? thy master ? I
 am Kay.
 We lack thee by the hearth.'

And Gareth to him,
 'Master no more ! too well I know thee,
 ay—
 The most ungente knight in Arthur's
 hall.'

'Have at thee then,' said Kay: they
 shock'd, and Kay
 Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,
 'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she
 fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly
 Behind her, and the heart of her good horse
 Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
 Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke.

'What doest thou, scullion, in my
 fellowship?
 Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the
 more

Or love thee better, that by some device
 Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
 Thou hast overthrown and slain thy
 master—thou!—

Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—
 to me

Thou smell'st all of kitchen as before.'

'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answer'd gently,
 'say
 Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
 I leave not till I finish this fair quest,
 Or die therefore.'

'Ay, wilt thou finish it?
 Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he
 talks!

The listening rogue hath caught the
 manner of it.

But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with,
 knave,

And then by such a one that thou for all
 The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
 Shalt not once dare to look him in the
 face.'

'I shall assay,' said Gareth with a smile
 That madden'd her, and away she flash'd
 again

Down the long avenues of a boundless
 wood,

And Gareth following was again beknaved.

'Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the
 only way
 Where Arthur's men are set along the
 wood;

The wood is nigh as full of thieves as
 leaves:

If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,
 Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of
 thine?

Fight, an thou canst: I have miss'd the
 only way.'

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong
 Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;
 Then after one long slope was mounted,
 saw,

Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand
 pines

A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
 To westward—in the deeps whereof a
 mere,

Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,
 Under the half-dead sunset glared; and
 shouts

Ascended, and there brake a servingman
 Flying from out of the black wood, and
 crying,

'They have bound my lord to cast him in
 the mere.'

Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the
 wrong'd,

But straitlier bound am I to bide with
 thee.'

And when the damsel spake contemptu-
 ously,

'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,
 'Follow, I lead!' so down among the
 pines

He plunged; and there, blackshadow'd
 nigh the mere,

And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and
 reed,

Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,
 A stone about his neck to drown him
 in it.

Three with good blows he quieted, but
 three

Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed
 the stone

From off his neck, then in the mere beside
 Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.

Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free
 feet

Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

'Well that ye came, or else these caitiff
 rogues
 Had wreak'd themselves on me ; good
 cause is theirs
 To hate me, for my wont hath ever been
 To catch my thief, and then like vermin
 here
 Drown him, and with a stone about his
 neck ;
 And under this wan water many of them
 Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
 And rise, and flickering in a grimly light
 Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have
 saved a life
 Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this
 wood.
 And fain would I reward thee worship-
 fully.
 What guerdon will ye ?'

Gareth sharply spake,
 'None ! for the deed's sake have I done
 the deed,
 In uttermost obedience to the King.
 But wilt thou yield this damsel harbour-
 age ?'

Whereat the Baron saying, 'I well
 believe
 You be of Arthur's Table,' a light laugh
 Broke from Lynette, 'Ay, truly of a truth,
 And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-
 knave !—
 But deem not I accept thee aught the
 more,
 Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit
 Down on a rout of craven foresters.
 A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.
 Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen
 still.
 But an this lord will yield us harbourage,
 Well.'

So she spake. A league beyond the
 wood,
 All in a full-fair manor and a rich,
 His towers where that day a feast had
 been
 Held in high hall, and many a viand left,
 And many a costly cate, received the
 three.

And there they placed a peacock in his
 pride
 Before the damsel, and the Baron set
 Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

'Meseems, that here is much dis-
 courtesy,
 Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at myside.
 Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's
 hall,
 And pray'd the King would grant me
 Lancelot
 To fight the brotherhood of Day and
 Night—

The last a monster unsubduable
 Of any save of him for whom I call'd—
 Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-
 knave,
 "The quest is mine ; thy kitchen-knave
 am I,
 And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks
 am I."

Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
 "Go therefore," and so gives the quest
 to him—

Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine
 Than ride abroad redressing women's
 wrong,
 Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.'

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed,
 the lord
 Now look'd at one and now at other, left
 The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
 And, seating Gareth at another board,
 Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

'Friend, whether thou be kitchen-
 knave, or not,
 Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,
 And whether she be mad, or else the
 King,
 Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
 I ask not : but thou strikest a strong
 stroke,
 For strong thou art and goodly there-
 withal,
 And saver of my life ; and therefore now,
 For here be mighty men to joust with,
 weigh

Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel
back

To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.
Thy pardon ; I but speak for thine avail,
The saver of my life.'

And Gareth said,
' Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
Despite of Day and Night and Death and
Hell.'

So when, next morn, the lord whose
life he saved
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on
their way
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth
spake,
' Lead, and I follow.' Haughtily she
replied,

' I fly no more : I allow thee for an
hour.

Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore,
methinks

Some ruth is mine for thee. Back wilt
thou, fool?

For hard by here is one will overthrow
And slay thee : then will I to court again,
And shame the King for only yielding
me

My champion from the ashes of his hearth.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd cour-
teously,

' Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt
find

My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay
Among the ashes and wedded the King's
son.'

Then to the shore of one of those long
loops
Where thro' the serpent river coil'd, they
came.

Rough-thicketed were the banks and
steep ; the stream

Full, narrow ; this a bridge of single arc
Took at a leap ; and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold

In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in
hue,

Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.

And therebefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, ' Damsel, is this
he,

The champion thou hast brought from
Arthur's hall ?

For whom we let thee pass.' ' Nay, nay,'
she said,

' Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter
scorn

Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee
here

His kitchen-knave : and look thou to
thyself :

See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarm'd : he is not knight
but knave.'

Then at his call, ' O daughters of the
Dawn,

And servants of the Morning-Star, ap-
proach,

Arm me,' from out the silken curtain-folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair
girls

In gilt and rosy raiment came : their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd ; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with
gem

Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave
a shield

Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was
brought,

Glorying ; and in the stream beneath him,
shone

Immingled with Heaven's azure waver-
ingly,

The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

Then she that watch'd him, ' Wherefore
stare ye so ?

Thou shakest in thy fear : there yet is
time :

Flee down the valley before he get to horse.

Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but knave.'

Said Gareth, 'Damsel, whether knave or knight,

Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay me and revile.
Fair words were best for him who fights
for thee;

But truly foul are better, for they send
That strength of anger thro' mine arms,
I know

That I shall overthrow him.'

And he that bore

The star, when mounted, cried from o'er
the bridge,

'A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with
scorn.

For this were shame to do him further
wrong

Than set him on his feet, and take his
horse

And arms, and so return him to the
King.

Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly,
knave.

Avoid: for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady.'

'Dog, thou liest.

I spring from loftier lineage than thine
own.'

He spake; and all at fiery speed the two
Shock'd on the central bridge, and either
spear

Bent but not brake, and either knight at
once,

Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and
drew,

And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his
brand

He drave his enemy backward down the
bridge,

The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken,
kitchen-knave!'

Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one
stroke

Laid him that clove it grovelling on the
ground.

Then cried the fall'n, 'Take not my
life: I yield.'

And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me
Good—I accord it easily as a grace.'

She reddening, 'Insolent scullion: I of
thee?

I bound to thee for any favour ask'd!'

'Then shall he die.' And Gareth there
unlaced

His helmet as to slay him, but sheshriek'd,
'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay

One nobler than thyself.' 'Damsel, thy
charge

Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command. Arise

And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say
His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See
thou crave

His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee.

Thy shield is mine—farewell; and,
damsel, thou,

Lead, and I follow.'

And fast away she fled.

Then when he came upon her, spake,
'Methought,

Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on
the bridge

The savour of thy kitchen came upon me
A little faintlier: but the wind hath
changed:

Iscent it twenty-fold.' And then she sang,
'"O morning star" (not that tall felon there

Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness
Or some device, hast foully overthrown),

"O morning star that smilest in the blue,
O star, my morning dream hath proven
true,

Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled
on me."

'But thou begone, take counsel, and
away,

For hard by here is one that guards a
ford—

The second brother in their fool's parable—
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot.
Care not for shame : thou art not knight
but knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laugh-
ingly,

'Parables? Hear a parable of the knave.
When I was kitchen-knave among the rest
Fierce was the hearth, and one of my
co-mates

Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his
coat,

"Guard it," and there was none to meddle
with it.

And such a coat art thou, and thee the
King

Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
To worry, and not to flee—and—knight
or knave—

The knave that doth thee service as full
knight

Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing.'

'Ay, Sir Knave!

Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a
knight,

Being but knave, I hate thee all the more.'

'Fair damsel, you should worship me
the more,

That, being but knave, I throw thine
enemies.'

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'but thou shalt meet
thy match.'

So when they touch'd the second river-
loop,

Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday
Sun

Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,

Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the
fierce shield,

All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying
blots

Before them when he turn'd from watch-
ing him.

He from beyond the roaring shallow
roar'd,

'What doest thou, brother, in my marches
here?'

And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,
Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's
hall

Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath
his arms.'

'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and vizoring up a
red

And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd horse across the foamings of the
ford,

Whom Gareth met midstream: no room
was there

For lance or tourney-skill: four strokes
they struck

With sword, and these were mighty; the
new knight

Had fear he might be shamed; but as
the Sun

Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the
fifth,

The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream,
the stream

Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the
ford;

So drew him home; but he that fought
no more,

As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the

King.

'Myself when I return will plead for thee.'

'Lead, and I follow.' Quietly she led.

'Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed
again?'

'Nay, not a point: nor art thou victor
here.

There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I

saw it.

"O Sun" (not this strong fool whom
thou, Sir Knave,

Hast overthrown thro' mere unhappiness),
"O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or
pain,

O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly: twice my love hath smiled
on me."

'What knowest thou of lovesong or of
love?

Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly
born,

Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea,
perchance,—

"O dewy flowers that open to the
sun,

O dewy flowers that close when day is
done,

Blow sweetly: twice my love hath smiled
on me."

'What knowest thou of flowers, except,
belike,

To garnish meats with? hath not our
good King

Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchen-
dom,

A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye
round

The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar's
head?

Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries
and bay.

"O birds, that warble to the morning
sky,

O birds that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly: twice my love hath smiled
on me."

'What knowest thou of birds, lark,
mavis, merle,

Linnet? what dream ye when they utter
forth

May-music growing with the growing
light,

Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the
snare

(So runs thy fancy) these be for the spit,
Larding and basting. See thou have not
now

Larded thy last, except thou turn and fly.
There stands the third fool of their
allegory.'

For there beyond a bridge of treble
bow,

All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the
knight,

That named himself the Star of Evening,
stood.

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the
madman there

Naked in open dayshine?' 'Nay,' she
cried,

'Not naked, only wrapt in harden'd skins
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave
His armour off him, these will turn the
blade.'

Then the third brother shouted o'er the
bridge,

'O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy ward is higher up: but have ye slain
The damsel's champion?' and the damsel
cried,

'No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's
heaven

With all disaster unto thine and thee!
For both thy younger brethren have gone
down

Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir
Star;

Art thou not old?'

'Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty
boys.'

Said Gareth, 'Old, and over-bold in
brag!

But that same strength which threw the
Morning Star

Can throw the Evening.'

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.

'Approach and arm me!' With slow
steps from out

An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought
a helm

With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the Star of
Even

Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his emblem, shone.

But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle-bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge ;
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him
again,

But up like fire he started : and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his
knees,

So many a time he vaulted up again ;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great
heart,

Foedoaming all his trouble was in vain,
Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins

To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not
put us down !'

He half despairs ; so Gareth seem'd to
strike

Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the
while,

'Well done, knave-knight, well stricken,
O good knight-knave—

O knave, as noble as any of all the
knights—

Shame me not, shame me not. I have
prophesied—

Strike, thou art worthy of the Table
Round—

His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd
skin—

Strike—strike—the wind will never
change again.'

And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armour off
him,

But lash'd in vain against the harden'd
skin,

And could not wholly bring him under,
more

Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge
on ridge,

The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and
springs

For ever ; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the
hilt.

'I have thee now' ; but forth that other
sprang,

And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry
arms

Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the
bridge

Down to the river, sink or swim, and
cried,

'Lead, and I follow.'

But the damsel said,
'I lead no longer ; ride thou at my side ;
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-
knaves.

"O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy
plain,

O rainbow with three colours after rain,
Shine sweetly : thrice my love hath smiled
on me."

'Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had
added—Knight,

But that I heard thee call thyself a
knave,—

Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee ; noble I am ; and thought
the King

Scorn'd me and mine ; and now thy
pardon, friend,

For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and meek
withal

As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,
Hast mazed my wit : I marvel what thou
art.'

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to
blame,

Saving that you mistrusted our good King
Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking,
one

Not fit to cope your quest. You said
your say ;

Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth !
I hold

He scarce is knight, yea but half-man,
 nor meet
 To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets
 His heart be stirr'd with any foolish heat
 At any gentle damsel's waywardness.
 Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings
 fought for me:
 And seeing now thy words are fair,
 methinks
 There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his
 great self,
 Hath force to quell me.'

Nigh upon that hour
 When the lonehern forgets his melancholy,
 Lets down his other leg, and stretching,
 dreams
 Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
 Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at
 him,
 And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
 Where bread and baken meats and good
 red wine
 Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
 Had sent her coming champion, waited
 him.

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein
 Were slabs of rock with figures, knights
 on horse
 Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning
 hues.
 'Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once
 was here,
 Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the
 rock
 The war of Time against the soul of man.
 And yon four fools have suck'd their
 allegory
 From these damp walls, and taken but
 the form.
 Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt
 and read—
 In letters like to those the vexillary
 Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming
 Gelt—
 'PHOSPHORUS,' then 'MERIDIES'—
 'HESPERUS'—
 'NOX'—'MORS,' beneath five figures,
 armed men,

Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
 And running down the Soul, a Shape that
 fled
 With broken wings, torn raiment and
 loose hair,
 For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.
 'Follow the faces, and we find it. Look,
 Who comes behind?'

For one—delay'd at first
 Thro' helping back the dislocated Kay
 To Camelot, then by what thereafter
 chanced,
 The damsel's headlong error thro' the
 wood—
 Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-
 loops—
 His blue shield-lions cover'd—softly drew
 Behind the twain, and when he saw the
 star
 Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him,
 cried,
 'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my
 friend.'
 And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry;
 But when they closed—in a moment—at
 one touch
 Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the
 world—
 Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
 That when he found the grass within his
 hands
 He laugh'd; the laughter jarr'd upon
 Lynette:
 Harshly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and
 overthrown,
 And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
 Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast
 in vain?'
 'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
 Of old King Lot and good Queen Belli-
 cent,
 And victor of the bridges and the ford,
 And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by
 whom
 I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—
 Device and sorcery and unhappiness—
 Out, sword; we are thrown!' And
 Lancelot answer'd, 'Prince,
 O Gareth—thro' the mere unhappiness

Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole,
As on the day when Arthur knighted him.'

Then Gareth, 'Thou—Lancelot!—
thine the hand
That threw me? An some chance to mar
the boast
Thy brethren of thee make—which could
not chance—
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,
Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot
—thou!'

Whereat the maiden, petulant, 'Lancelot,
Why came ye not, when call'd? and
wherefore now
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my
knave,
Who being still rebuked, would answer
still
Courteous as any knight—but now, if
knight,
The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd
and trick'd,
And only wondering wherefore play'd
upon:
And doubtful whether I and mine be
scorn'd.
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's
hall,
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave,
prince and fool,
I hate thee and for ever.'

And Lancelot said,
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight
art thou
To the King's best wish. O damsel, be
you wise
To call him shamed, who is but over-
thrown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many
a time.
Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown.
With sword we have not striven; and
thy good horse

And thou are weary; yet not less I felt
Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance
of thine.

Well hast thou done; for all the stream
is freed,
And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his
foes,
And when reviled, hast answer'd graci-
ously,
And makest merry when overthrown.
Prince, Knight,
Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our
Table Round!'

And then when turning to Lynette he
told
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,
'Ay well—ay well—for worse than being
fool'd
Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and
drinks
And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
Seek, till we find.' And when they
sought and found,
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden
gazed.
'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to
sleep hast thou.
Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to
him
As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep—
Good lord, how sweetly smells the
honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were
one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
O Lancelot, Lancelot'—and she clapt
her hands—
'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
Is knight and noble. See now, sworn
have I,
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
To bring thee back to do the battle with
him.
Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;

Who doubts thee victor? so will my
knight-knave
Miss the full flower of this accomplish-
ment.'

Said Lancelot, 'Peradventure he, you
name,
May know my shield. Let Gareth, an
he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger,
fresh,
Not to be spurr'd, loving the battle as
well
As he that rides him.' 'Lancelot-like,'
she said,
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in
all.'

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd
the shield;
'Ramp ye lance-splintering lions, on whom
all spears
Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!
Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your
lord!—
Care not, good beasts, so well I care for
you.
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these
Streams virtue—fire—thro' one that will
not shame
Even the shadow of Lancelot undershield.
Hence: let us go.'

 Silent the silent field
They traversed. Arthur's harp tho'
summer-wan,

In counter motion to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dreaming on his
liege.

A star shot: 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foe
falls!'

An owl whoopt: 'Hark the victor peal-
ing there!'

Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent
him, crying,

'Yield, yield him this again: 'tis he must
fight:

I curse the tongue that all thro' yesterday
Reviled thee, and hath wrought on
Lancelot now

To lend thee horse and shield: wonders
ye have done;

Miracles ye cannot: here is glory enow
In having flung the three: I see thee
maim'd,

Mangled: I swear thou canst not fling
the fourth.'

'And wherefore, damsel? tell me all
ye know.

You cannot scare me; nor rough face, or
voice,

Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery
Appal me from the quest.'

'Nay, Prince,' she cried,
'God wot, I never look'd upon the face,
Seeing he never rides abroad by day;
But watch'd him have I like a phantom
pass

Chilling the night: nor have I heard the
voice.

Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported
him

As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger tare him, massacring
Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft
babe!

Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant
flesh,

Monster! O Prince, I went for Lancelot
first,

The quest is Lancelot's: give him back
the shield.'

Said Gareth laughing, 'An he fight for
this,

Belike he wins it as the better man:
Thus—and not else!'

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings of their chivalry
When one might meet a mightier than
himself;

How best to manage horse, lance, sword
and shield,

And so fill up the gap where force might
fail

With skill and fineness. Instant were
his words.

Then Gareth, 'Here be rules. I know
 but one—
 To dash against mine enemy and to win.
 Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the
 joust,
 And seen thy way.' 'Heaven help thee,'
 sigh'd Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that
 grew
 To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they
 rode
 In converse till she made her palfrey halt,
 Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd,
 'There.'
 And all the three were silent seeing,
 pitch'd
 Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
 A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
 Sunder the glooming crimson on the
 marge,
 Black, with black banner, and a long
 black horn
 Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth
 graspt,
 And so, before the two could hinder him,
 Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the
 horn.
 Echo'd the walls; a light twinkled; anon
 Came lights and lights, and once again
 he blew;
 Whereon were hollow tramlings up and
 down
 And muffled voices heard, and shadows
 past;
 Till high above him, circled with her
 maids,
 The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
 Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
 White hands, and courtesy; but when
 the Prince
 Three times had blown—after long hush
 —at last—
 The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
 Thro' those black foldings, that which
 housed therein.
 High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack
 arms,
 With white breast-bone, and barren ribs
 of Death,

And crown'd with fleshless laughter—
 some ten steps—
 In the half-light—thro' the dim dawn—
 advanced
 The monster, and then paused, and spake
 no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,
 'Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength
 of ten,
 Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God
 hath given,
 But must, to make the terror of thee more,
 Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries
 Of that which Life hath done with, and
 the clod,
 Less dull than thou, will hide with
 mantling flowers
 As if for pity?' But he spake no word;
 Which set the horror higher: a maiden
 swoon'd;
 The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and
 wept,
 As doom'd to be the bride of Night and
 Death;
 Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his
 helm;
 And ev'n Sir Lancelot thro' his warm
 blood felt
 Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were
 aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely
 neigh'd,
 And Death's dark war-horse bounded
 forward with him.
 Then those that did not blink the terror,
 saw
 That Death was cast to ground, and
 slowly rose.
 But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the
 skull.
 Half fell to right and half to left and lay.
 Then with a stronger buffet he clove the
 helm
 As throughly as the skull; and out from
 this
 Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
 Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying,
 'Knight,

Slay me not : my three brethren bad me
do it,
To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.
They never dream'd the passes would be
past.'

Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair
child,

What madness made thee challenge the
chief knight

Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bad
me do it.

They hate the King, and Lancelot, the
King's friend,

They hoped to slay him somewhere on
the stream,

They never dream'd the passes could be
past.'

Then sprang the happier day from
underground ;

And Lady Lyonors and her house, with
dance

And revel and song, made merry over
Death,

As being after all their foolish fears
And horrors only proven a blooming boy.

So large mirth lived and Gareth won the
quest.

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he, that told it later, says Lynette.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT

THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's
court,

A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great Order of the Table Round,
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her, as he loved the light of
Heaven.

And as the light of Heaven varies, now
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved
Geraint

To make her beauty vary day by day,

In crimsons and in purples and in gems.
And Enid, but to please her husband's
eye,

Who first had found and loved her in a
state

Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him
In some fresh splendour ; and the Queen
herself,

Grateful to Prince Geraint for service
done,

Loved her, and often with her own white
hands

Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court.

And Enid loved the Queen, and with true
heart

Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth.

And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced
Geraint.

But when a rumour rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,

Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet
was heard

The world's loud whisper breaking into
storm,

Not less Geraint believed it ; and there fell
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,

Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint

In nature : wherefore going to the King,
He made this pretext, that his princedom
lay

Close on the borders of a territory,
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff
knights,

Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law :

And therefore, till the King himself
should please

To cleanse this common sewer of all his
realm,

He craved a fair permission to depart,
And there defend his marches ; and the
King

Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the
shores

Of Severn, and they past to their own
land ;

Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compass'd her with sweet observances
And worship, never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful of his promise to the King,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his principedom and its cares.
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.
And by and by the people, when they met
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all
gone,

And molten down in mere uxoriousness.
And this she gather'd from the people's
eyes :

This too the women who attired her head,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless
love,

Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the
more :

And day by days she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy ;
While he that watch'd her sadden, was
the more

Suspicious that her nature had a taint.

At last, it chanced that on a summer
morn

(They sleeping each by either) the new sun
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the
room,

And heated the strong warrior in his
dreams ;

Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his
throat,

The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle
sloped,

As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he ?

Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk

And accusation of uxoriousness

Across her mind, and bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said :

' O noble breast and all-puissant arms,
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is
gone ?

I *am* the cause, because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they
say.

And yet I hate that he should linger here ;
I cannot love my lord and not his name.
Far liefer had I gird his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mightful hand striking
great blows

At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.
Far better were I laid in the dark earth,
Not hearing any more his noble voice,
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
And darken'd from the high light in his
eyes,

Than that my lord thro' me should suffer
shame.

Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
Or maybe pierced to death before mine
eyes,

And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
And how men slur him, saying all his force
Is melted into mere effeminacy ?

O me, I fear that I am no true wife.'

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
And the strong passion in her made her
weep

True tears upon his broad and naked
breast,

And these awoke him, and by great mis-
chance

He heard but fragments of her later words,
And that she fear'd she was not a true wife.
And then he thought, ' In spite of all my
care,

For all my pains, poor man, for all my
pains,

She is not faithful to me, and I see her
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's
hall.'

Then tho' he loved and revered her
 too much
 To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
 Right thro' his manful breast darted the
 pang
 That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
 Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.
 At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of
 bed,
 And shook his drowsy squire awake and
 cried,
 'My charger and her palfrey'; then to her,
 'I will ride forth into the wilderness;
 For tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,
 I have not fall'n so low as some would
 wish.
 And thou, put on thy worst and meanest
 dress
 And ride with me.' And Enid ask'd,
 amazed,
 'If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault.'
 But he, 'I charge thee, ask not, but obey.'
 Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
 A faded mantle and a faded veil,
 And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,
 Wherein she kept them folded reverently
 With sprigs of summer laid between the
 folds,
 She took them, and array'd herself therein,
 Remembering when first he came on her
 Drest in that dress, and how he loved her
 in it,
 And all her foolish fears about the dress,
 And all his journey to her, as himself
 Had told her, and their coming to the
 court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
 Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.
 There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
 Before him came a forester of Dean,
 Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
 Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
 First seen that day: these things he told
 the King.

Then the good King gave order to let blow
 His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.
 And when the Queen petition'd for his
 leave
 To see the hunt, allow'd it easily.

So with the morning all the court were
 gone.

But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
 Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her
 love

For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt;
 But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
 Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd
 the wood;

There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd
 Waiting to hear the hounds; but heard
 instead

A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince
 Geraint,

Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress
 Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,
 Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow
 ford

Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll.
 A purple scarf, at either end whereof
 There swung an apple of the purest gold,
 Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up
 To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
 In summer suit and silks of holiday.

Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she,
 Sweetly and statelily, and with all grace
 Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd
 him:

'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'later
 than we!'

'Yea, noble Queen,' he answer'd, 'and
 so late

That I but come like you to see the
 hunt,

Not join it.' 'Therefore wait with me,'
 she said;

'For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
 There is good chance that we shall hear
 the hounds:

Here often they break covert at our feet.'

And while they listen'd for the distant
 hunt,

And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,
 King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth,
 there rode

Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;
 Whereof the dwarf lagg'd latest, and the
 knight

Had vizzor up, and show'd a youthful face,

Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the King's hall, desired his name, and sent

Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf ;
Who being vicious, old and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
Made answer sharply that she should not know.

'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said.
'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried the dwarf ;

'Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of him' ;

And when she put her horse toward the knight,

Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd

Indignant to the Queen ; whereat Geraint
Exclaiming, ' Surely I will learn the name,'
Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it of him,

Who answer'd as before ; and when the Prince

Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,

Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.

The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
Dyeing it ; and his quick, instinctive hand
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him :
But he, from his exceeding manfulness
And pure nobility of temperament,
Wroth to be wroth at such a worm,
refrain'd

From ev'n a word, and so returning said :

' I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
Done in your maiden's person to yourself :
And I will track this vermin to their earths :

For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt
To find, at some place I shall come at,
arms

On loan, or else for pledge ; and, being found,

Then will I fight him, and will break his pride,

And on the third day will again be here,
So that I be not fall'n in fight. Farewell.'

' Farewell, fair Prince,' answer'd the stately Queen.

' Be prosperous in this journey, as in all ;
And may you light on all things that you love,

And live to wed with her whom first you love :

But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,

And I, were she the daughter of a king,

Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,

Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.'

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard

The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,

A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy glade

And valley, with fixt eye following the three.

At last they issued from the world of wood,

And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,
And show'd themselves against the sky,
and sank.

And thither came Geraint, and underneath

Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side whereof,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose ;

And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry ravine :

And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the three,

And enter'd, and were lost behind the walls.

' So,' thought Geraint, ' I have track'd him to his earth.'

And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot
hiss

And bustling whistle of the youth who
scour'd

His master's armour; and of such a one
He ask'd, 'What means the tumult in
the town?'

Who told him, scouring still, 'The
sparrow-hawk!'

Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask'd yet once more what meant the
hubbub here?

Who answer'd gruffly, 'Ugh! the sparrow-
hawk.'

Then riding further past an armourer's,
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above
his work,

Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the self-same query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him,
said:

'Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-
hawk

Has little time for idle questioners.'
Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden
spleen:

'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-
hawk!

Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck
him dead!

Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
The murmur of the world! What is it
to me?

O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-
hawks!

Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-
mad,

Where can I get me harbourage for the
night?

And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy?
Speak!'

Whereat the armourer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in
hand

And answer'd, 'Pardon me, O stranger
knight;

We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
And there is scanty time for half the work.
Arms? truth! I know not: all are
wanted here.

Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know
not, save,

It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
Yonder.' He spoke and fell to work
again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry
ravine.

There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,
(His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and
said:

'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint
replied,

'O friend, I seek a harbourage for the
night.'

Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-
door'd.'

'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied
Geraint;

'So that ye do not serve me sparrow-
hawks

For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours'
fast.'

Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed
Earl,

And answer'd, 'Graver cause than yours
is mine

To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-
hawk:

But in, go in; for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest.'

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His charger trampling many a prickly
star

Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
He look'd and saw that all was ruinous.
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed
with fern;

And here had fall'n a great part of a
tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the
cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding
flowers :
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent,
wound
Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred
arms,
And suck'd the joining of the stones, and
look'd
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
Clear thro' the open casement of the hall,
Singing ; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form ;
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint ;
And made him like a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green
and red,
And he suspends his converse with a
friend,
Or it may be the labour of his hands,
To think or say, ' There is thenightingale ' ;
So fared it with Geraint, who thought
and said,
' Here, by God's grace, is the one voice
for me.'

It chanced the song that Enid sang
was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid
sang :

' Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and
lower the proud ;
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine,
storm, and cloud ;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor
hate.

' Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with
smile or frown ;
With that wild wheel we go not up or
down ;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are
great.

' Smile and we smile, the lords of many
lands ;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our
own hands ;
For man is man and master of his fate.

' Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring
crowd ;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the
cloud ;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor
hate.'

' Hark, by the bird's song ye may learn
the nest,'
Said Yniol ; ' enter quickly.' Entering
then,
Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
The dusky-rafter'd many-cobweb'd hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim bro-
cade ;
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-
white,
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter. In a moment thought
Geraint,

' Here by God's rood is the one maid for
me.'
But none spake word except the hoary
Earl :

' Enid, the good knight's horse stands in
the court ;

Take him to stall, and give him corn, and
then

Go to the town and buy us flesh and
wine ;

And we will make us merry as we may.
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are
great.'

He spake : the Prince, as Enid past
him, fain
To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught

His purple scarf, and held, and said,
‘Forbear!

Rest! the good house, tho’ ruin’d, O my
son,

Endures not that her guest should serve
himself.’

And reverencing the custom of the house
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall;
And after went her way across the bridge,
And reach’d the town, and while the
Prince and Earl

Yet spoke together, came again with one,
A youth, that following with a costrel bore
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and
wine.

And Enid brought sweet cakes to make
them cheer,

And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.
And then, because their hall must also
serve

For kitchen, boil’d the flesh, and spread
the board,

And stood behind, and waited on the
three.

And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
That crost the trencher as she laid it
down:

But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his
veins,

Let his eye rove in following, or rest
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky
hall;

Then suddenly address the hoary Earl:

‘Fair Host and Earl, I pray your
courtesy;

This sparrow-hawk, what is he? tell me
of him.

His name? but no, good faith, I will not
have it:

For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason’s hand, then have
I sworn

From his own lips to have it—I am
Geraint

Of Devon—for this morning when the
Queen

Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
Struck at her with his whip, and she re-
turn’d

Indignant to the Queen; and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have
it of him.

And all unarm’d I rode, and thought to
find

Arms in your town, where all the men
are mad;

They take the rustic murmur of their
bourg

For the great wave that echoes round the
world;

They would not hear me speak: but if
ye know

Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have
sworn

That I will break his pride and learn his
name,

Avenging this great insult done the
Queen.’

Then cried Earl Yniol, ‘Art thou he
indeed,

Geraint, a name far-sounded among men
For noble deeds? and truly I, when first
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
Felt ye were somewhat, yea, and by your
state

And presence might have guess’d you one
of those

That eat in Arthur’s hall at Camelot.

Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
For this dear child hath often heard me
praise

Your feats of arms, and often when I
paused

Hath ask’d again, and ever loved to hear;
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds

To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong:
O never yet had woman such a pair

Of suitors as this maiden; first Limours,

A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
 Drunk even when he woo'd ; and be he dead
 I know not, but he past to the wild land.
 The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
 My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
 Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,
 When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
 Refused her to him, then his pride awoke ;
 And since the proud man often is the mean,
 He sow'd a slander in the common ear,
 Affirming that his father left him gold,
 And in my charge, which was not render'd to him ;
 Bribed with large promises the men who served
 About my person, the more easily
 Because my means were somewhat broken into
 Thro' open doors and hospitality ;
 Raised my own town against me in the night
 Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house ;
 From mine own earldom foully ousted me ;
 Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
 For truly there are those who love me yet ;
 And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
 Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,
 But that his pride too much despises me :
 And I myself sometimes despise myself ;
 For I have let men be, and have their way ;
 Am much too gentle, have not used my power :
 Nor know I whether I be very base
 Or very manful, whether very wise
 Or very foolish ; only this I know,
 That whatsoever evil happen to me,
 I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
 But can endure it all most patiently.'

' Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint,
 ' but arms,
 That if the sparrow-hawk, this nephew,
 fight
 In next day's tourney I may break his pride.'

And Yniol answer'd, ' Arms, indeed,
 but old
 And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
 Are mine, and therefore at thine asking,
 thine.
 But in this tournament can no man tilt,
 Except the lady he loves best be there.
 Two forks are fixt into the meadow
 ground,
 And over these is placed a silver wand,
 And over that a golden sparrow-hawk,
 The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
 And this, what knight soever be in field
 Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
 And tilts with my good nephew there-
 upon,
 Who being apt at arms and big of bone
 Has ever won it for the lady with him,
 And toppling over all antagonism
 Has earn'd himself the name of sparrow-
 hawk.
 But thou, that hast no lady, canst not
 fight.'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright
 replied,
 Leaning a little toward him, ' Thy leave !
 Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
 For this dear child, because I never saw,
 Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,
 Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
 And if I fall her name will yet remain
 Untarnish'd as before ; but if I live,
 So aid me Heaven when at mine utter-
 most,
 As I will make her truly my true wife.'

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
 Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.
 And looking round he saw not Enid there,
 (Who hearing her own name had stol'n
 away)
 But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
 And fondling all her hand in his he said,

'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood.
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the
Prince.'

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and
she
With frequent smile and nod departing
found,

Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl;
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek,
and then

On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart: but never light and
shade

Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and
pale

Across the face of Enid hearing her;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle
breast;

Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it;
So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating her own unworthiness;
And when the pale and bloodless east
began

To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
Her mother too, and hand in hand they
moved

Down to the meadow where the jousts
were held,

And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when
Geraint

Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
Himself beyond the rest pushing could
move

The chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but thro'
these

Princelike his bearing shone; and errant
knights

And ladies came, and by and by the town
Flow'd in, and settling circled all the lists.
And there they fixt the forks into the
ground,

And over these they placed the silver wand,
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk.
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet
blown,

Spake to the lady with him and pro-
claim'd,

'Advance and take, as fairest of the fair,
What I these two years past have won
for thee,

The prize of beauty.' Loudly spake the
Prince,

'Forbear: there is a worthier,' and the
knight

With some surprise and thrice as much
disdain

Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his
face

Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at
Yule,

So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
'Do battle for it then,' no more; and
thrice

They clash'd together, and thrice they
brake their spears.

Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd
at each

So often and with such blows, that all the
crowd

Wonder'd, and now and then from distant
walls

There came a clapping as of phantom
hands.

So twice they fought, and twice they
breathed, and still

The dew of their great labour, and the
blood

Of their strong bodies, flowing, drain'd
their force.

But either's force was match'd till Yniol's
cry,

'Remember that great insult done the
Queen,'

Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade
aloft,

And crack'd the helmet thro', and bit the
bone,
And fell'd him, and set foot upon his
breast,

And said, 'Thy name?' To whom the
fallen man

Made answer, groaning, 'Edyrn, son of
Nudd !

Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.
My pride is broken : men have seen my
fall.'

'Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd,' replied
Geraint,

'These two things shalt thou do, or else
thou diest.

First, thou thyself, with damsel and with
dwarf,

Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and coming
there,

Crave pardon for that insult done the
Queen,

And shalt abide her judgment on it ; next,
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy
kin.

These two things shalt thou do, or thou
shalt die.'

And Edyrn answer'd, 'These things will
I do,

For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my
pride

Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall !'

And rising up, he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily.

And being young, he changed and came
to loathe

His crime of traitor, slowly drew himself
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at
last

In the great battle fighting for the King.

But when the third day from the
hunting-morn

Made a low splendour in the world, and
wings

Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
With her fair head in the dim-yellow light,
Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
Woke and bethought her of her promise
given

No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—
So bent he seem'd on going the third day,
He would not leave her, till her promise
given—

To ride with him this morning to the
court,

And there be made known to the stately
Queen,

And there be wedded with all ceremony.
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had look'd so
mean.

For as a leaf in mid-November is
To what it was in mid-October, seem'd
The dress that now she look'd on to the
dress

She look'd on ere the coming of Geraint.
And still she look'd, and still the terror
grew

Of that strange bright and dreadful thing,
a court,
All staring at her in her faded silk :
And softly to her own sweet heart she said :

'This noble prince who won our
earldom back,
So splendid in his acts and his attire,
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit
him !

Would he could tarry with us here awhile,
But being so beholden to the Prince,
It were but little grace in any of us,
Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,
To seek a second favour at his hands.
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
Myself would work eye dim, and finger
lame,
Far liefer than so much discredit him.'

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a
costly gift
Of her good mother, given her on the
night

Before her birthday, three sad years ago,
That night of fire, when Edyrn sack'd
their house,

And scatter'd all they had to all the winds :
For while the mother show'd it, and the
two

Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they
 fled

With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold had bought
 them bread :

And Edyrn's men had caught them in
 their flight,

And placed them in this ruin ; and she
 wish'd

The Prince had found her in her ancient
 home ;

Then let her fancy flit across the past,
And roam the goodly places that she
 knew ;

And last bethought her how she used to
 watch,

Near that old home, a pool of golden carp ;
And one was patch'd and blurr'd and
 lustreless

Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool ;
And half asleep she made comparison
Of that and these to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again ;
And dreamt herself was such a faded form
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool ;
But this was in the garden of a king ;
And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she
 knew

That all was bright ; that all about were
 birds

Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work ;
That all the turf was rich in plots that
 look'd

Each like a garnet or a turkis in it ;
And lords and ladies of the high court
 went

In silver tissue talking things of state ;
And children of the King in cloth of
 gold

Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down
 the walks ;

And while she thought 'They will not
 see me,' came

A stately queen whose name was
 Guinevere,

And all the children in their cloth of gold
Ran to her, crying, 'If we have fish at
 all

Let them be gold ; and charge the
 gardeners now

To pick the faded creature from the pool,
And cast it on the mixen that it die.'

And therewithal one came and seized on
 her,

And Enid started waking, with her heart
All overshadow'd by the foolish dream,
And lo ! it was her mother grasping her
To get her well awake ; and in her hand
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly :

'See here, my child, how fresh the
 colours look,

How fast they hold like colours of a shell
That keeps the wear and polish of the
 wave.

Why not ? It never yet was worn, I trow :
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know
 it.'

And Enid look'd, but all confused at
 first,

Could scarce divide it from her foolish
 dream :

Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
And answer'd, 'Yea, I know it ; your
 good gift,

So sadly lost on that unhappy night ;
Your own good gift !' 'Yea, surely,' said
 the dame,

'And gladly given again this happy morn.
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
Went Yniol thro' the town, and every-
 where

He found the sack and plunder of our
 house

All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town ;
And gave command that all which once
 was ours

Should now be ours again : and yester-eve,
While ye were talking sweetly with your
 Prince,

Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,
Because we have our earldom back again.
And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise ?

For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have
yours,

And howsoever patient, Yniol his.
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,
And page, and maid, and squire, and
seneschal,

And pastime both of hawk and hound,
and all

That appertains to noble maintenance.
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house ;
But since our fortune swerved from sun to
shade,

And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need
Constrain'd us, but a better time has
come ;

So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride :
For tho' ye won the prize of fairest fair,
And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.
And should some great court-lady say, the
Prince

Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the
hedge,

And like a madman brought her to the
court,

Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might
shame the Prince

To whom we are beholden ; but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, tho' they
sought

Thro' all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her
match.'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of
breath ;

And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay ;
Then, as the white and glittering star of
morn

Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed
herself,

Help'd by the mother's careful hand and
eye,

Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown ;
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round,
and said,

She never yet had seen her half so fair ;
And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of
flowers,

And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,
Flur, for whose love the Roman Cæsar
first

Invaded Britain, ' But we beat him back,
As this great Prince invaded us, and we,
Not beat him back, but welcomed him
with joy.

And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and
wild ;

But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the
gay.'

But while the women thus rejoiced,
Geraint

Woke where he slept in the high hall, and
call'd

For Enid, and when Yniol made report
Of that good mother making Enid gay
In such apparel as might well beseem
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,
He answer'd : ' Earl, entreat her by my
love,

Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
That she ride with me in her faded silk.'
Yniol with that hard message went ; it fell
Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn :
For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,
Dared not to glance at her good mother's
face,

But silently, in all obedience,
Her mother silent too, nor helping her,
Laid from her limbs the costly-broider'd
gift,

And robed them in her ancient suit again,
And so descended. Never man rejoiced
More than Geraint to greet her thus
attired ;

And glancing all at once as keenly at her
As glancing robins eye the delver's toil,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,

But rested with her sweet face satisfied ;
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly
said,

'O my new mother, be not wroth or
grieved
At thy new son, for my petition to her.
When late I left Caerleon, our great
Queen,
In words whose echo lasts, they were so
sweet,
Made promise, that whatever bride I
brought,
Herself would clothe her like the sun in
Heaven.

Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hall,
Beholding one so bright in dark estate,
I vow'd that could I gain her, our fair
Queen,

No hand but hers, should make your Enid
burst

Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought
perhaps,

That service done so graciously would
bind

The two together ; fain I would the two
Should love each other : how can Enid
find

A nobler friend ? Another thought was
mine ;

I came among you here so suddenly,
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I
was loved,

I doubted whether daughter's tenderness,
Or easy nature, might not let itself
Be moulded by your wishes for her weal ;
Or whether some false sense in her own
self

Of my contrasting brightness, overbore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall ;
And such a sense might make her long
for court

And all its perilous glories : and I
thought,

That could I somehow prove such force
in her

Link'd with such love for me, that at a
word

(No reason given her) she could cast aside
A splendour dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer ; or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted usage ; then I felt
That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and
flows,

Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do
rest,

A prophet certain of my prophecy,
That never shadow of mistrust can cross
Between us. Grant me pardon for my
thoughts :

And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,
When your fair child shall wear your
costly gift

Beside your own warm hearth, with, on
her knees,

Who knows ? another gift of the high
God,

Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to lisp
you thanks.'

He spoke : the mother smiled, but half
in tears,

Then brought a mantle down and wrapt
her in it,

And clasp'd and kiss'd her, and they rode
away.

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had
climb'd

The giant tower, from whose high crest,
they say,

Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea ;
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea

Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale
of Usk,

By the flat meadow, till she saw them
come ;

And then descending met them at the
gates,

Embraced her with all welcome as a
friend,

And did her honour as the Prince's bride,
And clothed her for her bridals like the
sun ;

And all that week was old Caerleon gay,

For by the hands of Dubric, the high
saint,
They twain were wedded with all cere-
mony.

And this was on the last year's Whit-
suntide.

But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her,
Drest in that dress, and how he loved
her in it,

And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey toward her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the
court.

And now this morning when he said
to her,

'Put on your worst and meanest dress,'
she found

And took it, and array'd herself therein.

GERAINT AND ENID

O PURBLIND race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true ;
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and
reach

That other, where we see as we are seen !

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing
forth

That morning, when they both had got
to horse,

Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his
heart,

Which, if he spoke at all, would break
perforce

Upon a head so dear in thunder, said :

'Not at my side. I charge thee ride
before,

Ever a good way on before ; and this

I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,

Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word !' and Enid was aghast ;

And forth they rode, but scarce three
paces on,

When crying out, 'Effeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be iron' ; he loosed a mighty
purse,

Hung at his belt, and hurl'd it toward
the squire.

So the last sight that Enid had of home
Was all the marble threshold flashing,
strown

With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the
squire

Chafing his shoulder : then he cried again
'To the wilds !' and Enid leading down
the tracks

Thro' which he bad her lead him on,
they past

The marches, and by bandit-haunted
holds,

Gray swamps and pools, waste places of
the hern,

And wildernesses, perilous paths, they
rode :

Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd
soon :

A stranger meeting them had surely
thought

They rode so slowly and they look'd so
pale,

That each had suffer'd some exceeding
wrong.

For he was ever saying to himself,

'O I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her
true'—

And there he broke the sentence in his
heart

Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue

May break it, when his passion masters
him.

And she was ever praying the sweet
heavens

To save her dear lord whole from any
wound.

And ever in her mind she cast about

For that unnoticed failing in herself,
Which made him look so cloudy and so
cold ;

Till the great plover's human whistle
amazed

Her heart, and glancing round the waste
she fear'd

In every wavering brake an ambuscade.
Then thought again, 'If there be such in
me,

I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it.'

But when the fourth part of the day
was gone,

Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a
rock

In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all ;
And heard one crying to his fellow,
'Look,

Here comes a laggard hanging down his
head,

Who seems no bolder than a beaten
hound ;

Come, we will slay him and will have his
horse

And armour, and his damsel shall be
ours.'

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and
said :

'I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all their caitiff talk ;
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die,
Than that my lord should suffer loss or
shame.'

Then she went back some paces of
return,

Met his full frown timidly firm, and said :
'My lord, I saw three bandits by the
rock

Waiting to fall on you, and heard them
boast

That they would slay you, and possess
your horse

And armour, and your damsel should be
theirs.'

He made a wrathful answer : 'Did I
wish

Your warning or your silence? one com-
mand

I laid upon you, not to speak to me,

And thus ye keep it ! Well then, look
—for now,

Whether ye wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost.'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
And down upon him bare the bandit
three.

And at the midmost charging, Prince
Geraint

Drave the long spear a cubit thro' his
breast

And out beyond ; and then against his
brace

Of comrades, each of whom had broken
on him

A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,
Swung from his brand a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd
the twain

Or slew them, and dismounting like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying
him,

Stript from the three dead wolves of
woman born

The three gay suits of armour which they
wore,

And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armour on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them
on

Before you'; and she drove them thro'
the waste.

He follow'd nearer : ruth began to
work

Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
The being he loved best in all the world,
With difficulty in mild obedience
Driving them on : he fain had spoken to
her,

And loosed in words of sudden fire the
wrath

And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all
within ;

But evermore it seem'd an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her
dead,

Than to cry 'Halt,' and to her own
bright face

Accuse her of the least immodesty :
And thus tongue-tied, it madē him wroth
the more

That she *could* speak whom his own ear
had heard

Call herself false : and suffering thus he
made

Minutes an age : but in scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
Before he turn to fall seaward again,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly
arm'd,

Whereof one seem'd far larger than her
lord,

And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a
prize !

Three horses and three goodly suits of
arms,

And all in charge of whom? a girl : set on.'
'Nay,' said the second, 'yonder comes a
knight.'

The third, 'A craven ; how he hangs his
head.'

The giant answer'd merrily, 'Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon
him.'

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and
said,

'I will abide the coming of my lord,
And I will tell him all their villainy.
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unawares.
I needs must disobey him for his good ;
How should I dare obey him to his harm?
Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me
for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine.'

And she abode his coming, and said to
him
With timid firmness, 'Have I leave to
speak ?'

He said, 'Ye take it, speaking,' and she
spoke.

'There lurk three villains yonder in the
wood,

And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one
Is larger-limb'd than you are, and they say
That they will fall upon you while ye
pass.'

To which he flung a wrathful answer
back :

'And if there were an hundred in the
wood,

And every man were larger-limb'd than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey me. Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man.'

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combat, only
breathe

Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a
breath.

And he, she dreaded most, bare down
upon him.

Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd ; but
Geraint's,

A little in the late encounter strain'd,
Struck thro' the bulky bandit's corselet
home,

And then brake short, and down his
enemy roll'd,

And there lay still ; as he that tells the
tale

Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slide
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls
to the beach,

And there lie still, and yet the sapling
grew :

So lay the man transfixt. His craven pair
Of comrades making slower at the
Prince,

When now they saw their bulwark fallen,
stood ;

On whom the victor, to confound them
more,

Spurr'd with his terrible war-cry ; for as
one,

That listens near a torrent mountain-
brook,

All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears
The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to
hear

His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair
who turn'd

Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an
innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd
the lance

That pleased him best, and drew from
those dead wolves

Their three gay suits of armour, each from
each,

And bound them on their horses, each on
each,

And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on
Before you,' and she drove them thro' the
wood.

He follow'd nearer still : the pain she
had

To keep them in the wild ways of the
wood,

Two sets of three laden with jingling
arms,

Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her
heart :

And they themselves, like creatures gently
born

But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light
ears, and felt

Her low firm voice and tender government.

So thro' the green gloom of the wood
they past,

And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike
chased

In the brown wild, and mowers mowing
in it :

And down a rocky pathway from the place
There came a fair-hair'd youth, that in
his hand

Bare victual for the mowers : and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale :
Then, moving downward to the meadow
ground,

He, when the fair-hair'd youth came by
him, said,

'Friend, let her eat ; the damsel is so
faint.'

'Yea, willingly,' replied the youth ; 'and
thou,

My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,
And only meet for mowers' ; then set
down

His basket, and dismounting on the sward
They let the horses graze, and ate them-
selves.

And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with her lord's pleasure ; but
Geraint

Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,
And when he found all empty, was
amazed ;

And 'Boy,' said he, 'I have eaten all,
but take

A horse and arms for guerdon ; choose
the best.'

He, reddening in extremity of delight,
'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold.'

'Ye will be all the wealthier,' cried the
Prince.

'I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,
'Not guerdon ; for myself can easily,
While your good damsel rests, return,
and fetch

Fresh victual for these mowers of our
Earl ;

For these are his, and all the field is his,
And I myself am his ; and I will tell
him

How great a man thou art : he loves to
know

When men of mark are in his territory :
And he will have thee to his palace here,
And serve thee costlier than with mowers'
fare.'

Then said Geraint, 'I wish no better
fare :

I never ate with angrier appetite

Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.
And into no Earl's palace will I go.

I know, God knows, too much of
palaces !

And if he want me, let him come to me.

But hire us some fair chamber for the
night,

And stalling for the horses, and return
With victual for these men, and let us
know.'

'Yea, my kind lord,' said the glad
youth, and went,

Held his head high, and thought himself
a knight,

And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
Leading the horse, and they were left
alone.

But when the Prince had brought his
errant eyes

Home from the rock, sideways he let
them glance

At Enid, where she droopt: his own
false doom,

That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he
sigh'd ;

Then with another humorous ruth re-
mark'd

The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning
scythe,

And after nodded sleepily in the heat.

But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,

And all the windy clamour of the daws

About her hollow turret, pluck'd the
grass

There growing longest by the meadow's
edge,

And into many a listless annulet,

Now over, now beneath her marriage
ring,

Wove and unweave it, till the boy return'd

And told them of a chamber, and they
went ;

Where, after saying to her, 'If ye will,

Call for the woman of the house,' to which

She answer'd, 'Thanks, my lord' ; the
two remain'd

Apart by all the chamber's width, and
mute

As creatures voiceless thro' the fault of
birth,

Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
Painted, who stare at open space, nor

glance

The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the
street,

And heel against the pavement echoing,
burst

Their drowse ; and either started while
the door,

Push'd from without, drave backward to
the wall,

And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,

Her suitor in old years before Geraint,
Enter'd, the wild lord of the place,

Limours.

He moving up with pliant courtliness,
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,

In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt
hand,

Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
And knew her sitting sad and solitary.

Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly
cheer

To feed the sudden guest, and sump-
tuously

According to his fashion, bad the host
Call in what men soever were his friends,

And feast with these in honour of their
Earl ;

'And care not for the cost ; the cost is
mine.'

And wine and food were brought, and
Earl Limours

Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
Free tales, and took the word and play'd

upon it,

And made it of two colours ; for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled

him,

Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets ; thus he moved the Prince
To laughter and his comrades to applause.

Then, when the Prince was merry, ask'd
Limours,

'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room,
and speak

To your good damsel there who sits apart,
And seems so lonely?' 'My free leave,'
he said;

'Get her to speak: she doth not speak to
me.'

Then rose Limours, and looking at his
feet,

Like him who tries the bridge he fears
may fail,

Croste and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisper-
ingly:

'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
Enid, my early and my only love,
Enid, the loss of whom hath turn'd me
wild—

What chance is this? how is it I see you
here?

Ye are in my power at last, are in my
power.

Yet fear me not: I call mine own self
wild,

But keep a touch of sweet civility
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.
I thought, but that your father came
between,

In former days you saw me favourably.
And if it were so do not keep it back:
Make me a little happier: let me know it:
Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost?
Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you
are.

And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy,
Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,
You come with no attendance, page or
maid,

To serve you—doth he love you as of old?
For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know
Tho' men may bicker with the things they
love,

They would not make them laughable in
all eyes,

Not while they loved them; and your
wretched dress,

A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks

Your story, that this man loves you no
more.

Your beauty is no beauty to him now:
A common chance—right well I know it
—pall'd—

For I know men: nor will ye win him
back,

For the man's love once gone never
returns.

But here is one who loves you as of old;
With more exceeding passion than of old:
Good, speak the word: my followers ring
him round:

He sits unarm'd; I hold a finger up;
They understand: nay; I do not mean
blood:

Nor need ye look so scared at what I say:
My malice is no deeper than a moat,
No stronger than a wall: there is the
keep;

He shall not cross us more; speak but
the word:

Or speak it not; but then by Him that
made me

The one true lover whom you ever own'd,
I will make use of all the power I have.
O pardon me! the madness of that hour,
When first I parted from thee, moves me
yet.'

At this the tender sound of his own
voice

And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eye moist; but Enid fear'd his
eyes,

Moist as they were, wine-heated from the
feast;

And answer'd with such craft as women
use,

Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That breaks upon them perilously, and
said:

'Earl, if you love me as in former
years,

And do not practise on me, come with
morn,

And snatch me from him as by violence;
Leave me to-night: I am weary to the
death.'

Low at leave-taking, with his brandish'd
plume
Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-
amorous Earl,
And the stout Prince bad him a loud
good-night.

He moving homeward babbled to his men,
How Enid never loved a man but him,
Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
Debating his command of silence given,
And that she now perforce must violate it,
Held commune with herself, and while
she held

He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly
pleased

To find him yet unwounded after fight,
And hear him breathing low and equally.
Anon she rose, and stepping lightly,
heap'd

The pieces of his armour in one place,
All to be there against a sudden need ;
Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoil'd
By that day's grief and travel, evermore
Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and
then

Went slipping down horrible precipices,
And strongly striking out her limbs
awoke ;

Then thought she heard the wild Earl at
the door,

With all his rout of random followers,
Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning
her ;

Which was the red cock shouting to the
light,

As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy
world,

And glimmer'd on his armour in the room.
And once again she rose to look at it,
But touch'd it unawares : jangling, the
casque

Fell, and he started up and stared at her.
Then breaking his command of silence
given,

She told him all that Earl Limours had
said,

Except the passage that he loved her not ;

Nor left untold the craft herself had used ;
But ended with apology so sweet,
Low-spoken, and of so few words, and
seem'd

So justified by that necessity,
That tho' he thought 'was it for him she
wept

In Devon ?' he but gave a wrathful groan,
Saying, 'Your sweet faces make good
fellows fools

And traitors. Call the host and bid him
bring

Charger and palfrey.' So she glided out
Among the heavy breathings of the
house,

And like a household Spirit at the walls
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and
return'd :

Then tending her rough lord, tho' all
unask'd,

In silence, did him service as a squire ;
Till issuing arm'd he found the host and
cried,

'Thy reckoning, friend ?' and ere he
learnt it, 'Take

Five horses and their armours' ; and the
host

Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,
'My lord, I scarce have spent the worth
of one !'

'Ye will be all the wealthier,' said the
Prince,

And then to Enid, 'Forward ! and to-
day

I charge you, Enid, more especially,
What thing soever ye may hear, or see,
Or fancy (tho' I count it of small use
To charge you) that ye speak not but
obey.'

And Enid answer'd, 'Yea, my lord,
I know

Your wish, and would obey ; but riding
first,

I hear the violent threats you do not
hear,

I see the danger which you cannot see :
Then not to give you warning, that seems
hard ;

Almost beyond me : yet I would obey.'

'Yea so,' said he, 'do it : be not too wise ;

Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,
Not all mismated with a yawning clown,
But one with arms to guard his head and yours,

With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams.'

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil ;
And that within her, which a wanton fool,
Or hasty judger would have call'd her guilt,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
And Geraint look'd and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,
Led from the territory of false Limours
To the waste earldom of another earl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,

Went Enid with her sullen follower on.
Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride

More near by many a rood than yesternorn,

It wellnigh made her cheerful ; till Geraint

Waving an angry hand as who should say

'Ye watch me,' sadden'd all her heart again.

But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof

Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw

Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.
Then not to disobey her lord's behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word,
Was in a manner pleased, and turning,
stood.

And in the moment after, wild Limours,

Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud

Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm,

Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,
And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him,
and bore

Down by the length of lance and arm beyond

The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,

And overthrew the next that follow'd him,
And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind.
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanish'd panic-stricken, like a shoal
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,

But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower ;
So, scared but at the motion of the man,
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,
And left him lying in the public way ;
So vanish friendships only made in wine.

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,

Who saw the chargers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,
Mixt with the flyers. 'Horse and man,'
he said,

'All of one mind and all right-honest friends !

Not a hoof left : and I methinks till now
Was honest—paid with horses and with arms ;

I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg :
And so what say ye, shall we strip him there

Your lover ? has your palfrey heart enough
To bear his armour ? shall we fast, or dine ?

No ?—then do thou, being right honest, pray

That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm,

I too would still be honest.' Thus he said :

And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way.

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death ;

Sofared it with Geraint, who being prick'd
In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armour secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye darken'd and his helmet
wagg'd ;

And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,
The Prince, without a word, from his
horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his
arms,

Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bared her forehead to the blistering
sun,

And swathed the hurt that drain'd her
dear lord's life.

Then after all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolation came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
Was cared as much for as a summer shower :
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him :
Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,
Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl ;
Half whistling and half singing a coarse
song,

He drove the dust against her veilles eyes :
Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm
Before an ever-fancied arrow, made

The long way smoke beneath him in his
fear ;

At which her palfrey whinnying lifted
heel,

And scour'd into the coppices and was lost,
While the great charger stood, grieved
like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl
Doorm,
Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet
beard,

Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
Came riding with a hundred lances up ;
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,
Cried out with a big voice, ' What, is he
dead ? '

' No, no, not dead ! ' she answer'd in all
haste.

' Would some of your kind people take
him up,

And bear him hence out of this cruel sun ?
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead.'

Then said Earl Doorm : ' Well, if he
be not dead,

Why wail ye for him thus ? ye seem a child.
And be he dead, I count you for a fool ;
Your wailing will not quicken him : dead
or not,

Ye mar a comely face with idiot tears.
Yet, since the face *is* comely—some of you,
Here, take him up, and bear him to our
hall :

An if he live, we will have him of our
band ;

And if he die, why earth has earth enough
To hide him. See ye take the charger too,
A noble one.'

He spake, and past away,
But left two brawny spearmen, who
advanced,

Each growling like a dog, when his good
bone

Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling : so the ruffians
growl'd,

Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,

Their chance of booty from the morning's
raid,

Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,
Such as they brought upon their forays out
For those that might be wounded; laid
him on it

All in the hollow of his shield, and took
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm,
(His gentle charger following him unled)
And cast him and the bier in which he
lay

Down on an oaken settle in the hall,
And then departed, hot in haste to join
Their luckier mates, but growling as
before,

And cursing their lost time, and the dead
man,

And their own Earl, and their own souls,
and her.

They might as well have blest her: she
was deaf

To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
There in the naked hall, propping his
head,

And chafing his pale hands, and calling
to him.

Till at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
And found his own dear bride propping
his head,

And chafing his faint hands, and calling
to him;

And felt the warm tears falling on his face;
And said to his own heart, 'She weeps
for me':

And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as
dead,

That he might prove her to the uttermost,
And say to his own heart, 'She weeps
for me.'

But in the falling afternoon return'd
The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to
the hall.

His lusty spearmen follow'd him with
noise:

Each hurling down a heap of things that
rang

Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,

And doff'd his helm: and then there
flutter'd in,

Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,
And mingled with the spearmen: and
Earl Doorm

Struck with a knife's haft hard against
the board,

And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his
spears.

And men brought in whole hogs and
quarter beeves,

And all the hall was dim with steam of
flesh:

And none spake word, but all sat down
at once,

And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
Feeding like horses when you hear them
feed;

Till Enid shrank far back into herself,
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.

But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he
would,

He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and
found

A damsel drooping in a corner of it.

Then he remember'd her, and how she
wept;

And out of her there came a power upon
him;

And rising on the sudden he said, 'Eat!
I never yet beheld a thing so pale.

God's curse, it makes me mad to see you
weep.

Eat! Look yourself. Good luck had
your good man,

For were I dead who is it would weep
for me?

Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath
Have I beheld a lily like yourself.

And so there lived some colour in your
cheek,

There is not one among my gentlewomen
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.

But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
And I will do the thing I have not done,

For ye shall share my earldom with me,
girl,

And we will live like two birds in one
nest,

And I will fetch you forage from all
fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will.'

He spoke: the brawny spearman let
his cheek
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and
turning stared;
While some, whose souls the old serpent
long had drawn
Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd
leaf
And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's
ear
What shall not be recorded—women they,
Women, or what had been those gracious
things,
But now desired the humbling of their
best,
Yea, would have help'd him to it: and
all at once
They hated her, who took no thought of
them,
But answer'd in low voice, her meek head
yet
Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesy,
He being as he is, to let me be.'

She spake so low he hardly heard her
speak,
But like a mighty patron, satisfied
With what himself had done so graci-
ously,
Assumed that she had thank'd him, add-
ing, 'Yea,
Eat and be glad, for I account you mine.'

She answer'd meekly, 'How should I
be glad
Henceforth in all the world at anything,
Until my lord arise and look upon me?'

Here the huge Earl cried out upon her
talk,
As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing; suddenly seized on
her,
And bare her by main violence to the
board,
And thrust the dish before her, crying,
'Eat.'

'No, no,' said Enid, vext, 'I will not
eat
Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me.' 'Drink, then,' he
answer'd. 'Here!'
(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it
to her,)
'Lo! I, myself, when flush'd with fight,
or hot,
God's curse, with anger—often I myself,
Before I well have drunken, scarce can
eat:
Drink therefore and the wine will change
your will.'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I
will not drink
Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me; and if he rise no
more,
I will not look at wine until I die.'

At this he turn'd all red and paced his
hall,
Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper
lip,
And coming up close to her, said at last:
'Girl, for I see ye scorn my courtesies,
Take warning: yonder man is surely
dead;
And I compel all creatures to my will.
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail
for one,
Who put your beauty to this flout and
scorn
By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus: cross me no
more.
At least put off to please me this poor
gown,
This silken rag, this beggar-woman's
weed:
I love that beauty should go beautifully:
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one
Who loves that beauty should go beauti-
fully?
Rise therefore; robe yourself in this:
obey.'

He spoke, and one among his gentle-
women
Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
Play'd into green, and thicker down the
front
With jewels than the sward with drops of
dew,
When all night long a cloud clings to the
hill,
And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung : so thickly shone
the gems.

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come ; and Enid
said :

'In this poor gown my dear lord found
me first,
And loved me serving in my father's hall :
In this poor gown I rode with him to
court,
And there the Queen array'd me like the
sun :
In this poor gown he bad me clothe
myself,
When now we rode upon this fatal quest
Of honour, where no honour can be
gain'd :
And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough :
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be :
I never loved, can never love but him :
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
He being as he is, to let me be.'

Then strode the brute Earl up and
down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his
teeth ;
Last, coming up quite close, and in his
mood
Crying, 'I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with
you ;
Take my salute,' unknighly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, 'He had not
dared to do it,
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,'
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the
wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at
his sword,
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),
Made but a single bound, and with a
sweep of it
Shore thro' the swarthy neck, and like a
ball
The russet-bearded head roll'd on the
floor.
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted
dead.
And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise,
and fled
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said :

'Enid, I have used you worse than
that dead man ;
Done you more wrong : we both have
undergone
That trouble which has left me thrice
your own :
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho' mine own ears heard you
yesternorn—
You thought me sleeping, but I heard
you say,
I heard you say, that you were no true
wife :
I swear I will not ask your meaning in
it :
I do believe yourself against yourself,
And will henceforward rather die than
doubt.'

And Enid could not say one tender
word,
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart :
She only pray'd him, 'Fly, they will
return

And slay you ; fly, your charger is with-
out,

My palfrey lost.' 'Then, Enid, shall you
ride

Behind me.' 'Yea,' said Enid, 'let us go.'

And moving out they found the stately
horse,

Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came,
and stoop'd

With a low whinny toward the pair : and
she

Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
Glad also ; then Geraint upon the horse
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his
foot

She set her own and climb'd ; he turn'd
his face

And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast
her arms

About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived thro' her, who in that perilous
hour

Put hand to hand beneath her husband's
heart,

And felt him hers again : she did not
weep,

But o'er her meek eyes came a happy
mist

Like that which kept the heart of Eden
green

Before the useful trouble of the rain :

Yet not so misty were her meek blue
eyes

As not to see before them on the path,
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his
lance

In rest, and made as if to fall upon him.
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of
blood,

She, with her mind all full of what had
chanced,

Shriek'd to the stranger 'Slay not a dead
man !'

'The voice of Enid,' said the knight ;
but she,

Beholding it was Edyrn son of Nudd,
Was moved so much the more, and
shriek'd again,

'O cousin, slay not him who gave you
life.'

And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake :
'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all
love ;

I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm ;
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon
him,

Who love you, Prince, with something
of the love

Wherewith we love the Heaven that
chastens us.

For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to
Hell,

By overthrowing me you threw me higher.
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table
Round,

And since I knew this Earl, when I my-
self

Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to
Doorm

(The King is close behind me) bidding
him

Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the
King.'

'He hears the judgment of the King
of kings,'

Cried the wan Prince ; 'and lo, the
powers of Doorm

Are scatter'd,' and he pointed to the field,
Where, huddled here and there on mound
and knoll,

Were men and women staring and aghast,
While some yet fled ; and then he plainlier
told

How the huge Earl lay slain within his
hall.

But when the knight besought him,
'Follow me,

Prince, to the camp, and in the King's
own ear

Speak what has chanced ; ye surely have
endured

Strange chances here alone ' ; that other
flush'd,

And hung his head, and halted in reply,
Fearing the mild face of the blameless
King,

And after madness acted question ask'd :
Till Edyrn crying, ' If ye will not go
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,'
' Enough,' he said, ' I follow,' and they
went.

But Enid in their going had two fears,
One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,
And one from Edyrn. Every now and
then,

When Edyrn rein'd his charger at her side,
She shrank a little. In a hollow land,
From which old fires have broken, men
may fear

Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said :

' Fair and dear cousin, you that most
had cause

To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.
Yourself were first the blameless cause to
make

My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood
Break into furious flame ; being repulsed
By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and
wrought

Until I overturn'd him ; then set up
(With one main purpose ever at my heart)
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour ;
Did her mock-honour as the fairest fair,
And, toppling over all antagonism,
So wax'd in pride, that I believed myself
Unconquerable, for I was wellnigh mad :
And, but for my main purpose in these
jousts,

I should have slain your father, seized
yourself.

I lived in hope that sometime you would
come

To these my lists with him whom best
you loved ;

And there, poor cousin, with your meek
blue eyes,

The truest eyes that ever answer'd Heaven,
Behold me overturn and trample on him.

Then, had you cried, or knelt, or pray'd
to me,

I should not less have kill'd him. And
you came,—

But once you came,—and with your own
true eyes

Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one
Speaks of a service done him) overthrow
My proud self, and my purpose three
years old,

And set his foot upon me, and give me
life.

There was I broken down ; there was I
saved :

Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating
the life

He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.
And all the penance the Queen laid upon
me

Was but to rest awhile within her court ;
Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,
Because I knew my deeds were known,
I found,

Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began
To glance behind me at my former life,
And find that it had been the wolf's in-
deed :

And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high
saint,

Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,
Which, when it weds with manhood,
makes a man.

And you were often there about the Queen,
But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw ;
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,
But kept myself aloof till I was changed ;
And fear not, cousin ; I am changed
indeed.'

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or
foe,

There most in those who most have done
them ill.

And when they reach'd the camp the
 King himself
 Advanced to greet them, and beholding
 her
 Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a
 word,
 But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held
 In converse for a little, and return'd,
 And, gravely smiling, lifted her from
 horse,
 And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother-
 like,
 And show'd an empty tent allotted her,
 And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
 Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and
 said :

' Prince, when of late ye pray'd me for
 my leave
 To move to your own land, and there
 defend
 Your marches, I was prick'd with some
 reproof,
 As one that let foul wrong stagnate and
 be,
 By having look'd too much thro' alien
 eyes,
 And wrought too long with delegated
 hands,
 Not used mine own : but now behold me
 come
 To cleanse this common sewer of all my
 realm,
 With Edyrn and with others : have ye
 look'd
 At Edyrn ? have ye seen how nobly
 changed ?
 This work of his is great and wonderful.
 His very face with change of heart is
 changed.
 The world will not believe a man repents :
 And this wise world of ours is mainly
 right.
 Full seldom doth a man repent, or use
 Both grace and will to pick the vicious
 quitch
 Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
 And make all clean, and plant himself
 afresh.
 Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart

As I will weed this land before I go.
 I, therefore, made him of our Table
 Round,
 Not rashly, but have proved him every-
 way
 One of our noblest, our most valorous,
 Sanest and most obedient : and indeed
 This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself
 After a life of violence, seems to me
 A thousand-fold more great and wonderful
 Than if some knight of mine, risking his
 life,
 My subject with my subjects under him,
 Should make an onslaught single on a
 realm
 Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,
 And were himself nigh wounded to the
 death.'

So spake the King ; low bow'd the
 Prince, and felt
 His work was neither great nor wonderful,
 And past to Enid's tent ; and thither came
 The King's own leech to look into his
 hurt ;
 And Enid tended on him there ; and there
 Her constant motion round him, and the
 breath
 Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,
 Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood
 With deeper and with ever deeper love,
 As the south-west that blowing Bala lake
 Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

But while Geraint lay healing of his
 hurt,
 The blameless King went forth and cast
 his eyes
 On each of all whom Uther left in charge
 Long since, to guard the justice of the
 King :
 He look'd and found them wanting ; and
 as now
 Men weed the white horse on the Berk-
 shire hills
 To keep him bright and clean as hereto-
 fore,
 He rooted out the slothful officer
 Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at
 wrong,

And in their chairs set up a stronger race
 With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
 To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
 Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
 And broke the bandit holds and cleansed
 the land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again,
 they past
 With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.
 There the great Queen once more embraced her friend,
 And clothed her in apparel like the day.
 And tho' Geraint could never take again
 That comfort from their converse which
 he took

Before the Queen's fair name was breathed
 upon,
 He rested well content that all was well.
 Thenceafter tarrying for a space they rode,
 And fifty knights rode with them to the
 shores
 Of Severn, and they past to their own
 land.

And there he kept the justice of the King
 So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts
 Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died :
 And being ever foremost in the chase,
 And victor at the tilt and tournament,
 They call'd him the great Prince and man
 of men.

But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call
 Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
 Enid the Good ; and in their halls arose
 The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
 Of times to be ; nor did he doubt her more,
 But rested in her fealty, till he crown'd
 A happy life with a fair death, and fell
 Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
 In battle, fighting for the blameless King.

BALIN AND BALAN

PELLAM the King, who held and lost with
 Lot

In that first war, and had his realm restored
 But render'd tributary, fail'd of late
 To send his tribute ; wherefore Arthur
 call'd

His treasurer, one of many years, and
 spake,
 'Go thou with him and him and bring it
 to us,
 Lest we should set one truer on his throne.
 Man's word is God in man.'

His Baron said
 'We go but harken : there be two strange
 knights
 Who sit near Camelot at a fountain-side,
 A mile beneath the forest, challenging
 And overthrowing every knight who
 comes.
 Wilt thou I undertake them as we pass,
 And send them to thee ?'

Arthur laugh'd upon him.
 'Old friend, too old to be so young,
 depart,
 Delay not thou for ought, but let them
 sit,
 Until they find a lustier than themselves.'

So these departed. Early, one fair
 dawn,
 The light-wing'd spirit of his youth
 return'd
 On Arthur's heart ; he arm'd himself and
 went,
 So coming to the fountain-side beheld
 Balin and Balan sitting statuelike,
 Brethren, to right and left the spring, that
 down,
 From underneath a plume of lady-fern,
 Sang, and the sand danced at the bottom
 of it.
 And on the right of Balin Balin's horse
 Was fast beside an alder, on the left
 Of Balan Balan's near a poplartree.
 'Fair Sirs,' said Arthur, 'wherefore sit
 ye here ?'

Balin and Balan answer'd 'For the sake
 Of glory ; we be mightier men than all
 In Arthur's court ; that also have we
 proved ;
 For whatsoever knight against us came
 Or I or he have easily overthrown.'
 'I too,' said Arthur, 'am of Arthur's
 hall,

But rather proven in his Paynim wars
Than famous jousts ; but see, or proven
or not,
Whether me likewise ye can overthrow.'
And Arthur lightly smote the brethren
down,
And lightly so return'd, and no man knew.

Then Balin rose, and Balan, and beside
The carolling water set themselves again,
And spake no word until the shadow
turn'd ;
When from the fringe of coppice round
them burst

A spangled pursuivant, and crying 'Sirs,
Rise, follow ! ye be sent for by the
King,'
They follow'd ; whom when Arthur seeing
ask'd
'Tell me your names ; why sat ye by the
well ?'

Balin the stillness of a minute broke
Saying 'An unmelodious name to thee,
Balin, "the Savage"—that addition
thine—

My brother and my better, this man here,
Balan. I smote upon the naked skull
A thrall of thine in open hall, my hand
Was gauntleted, half slew him ; for I
heard

He had spoken evil of me ; thy just wrath
Sent me a three-years' exile from thine
eyes.

I have not lived my life delightsomely :
For I that did that violence to thy thrall,
Had often wrought some fury on myself,
Saving for Balan : those three kingless
years

Have past—were wormwood-bitter to me.
King,

Methought that if we sat beside the well,
And hurl'd to ground what knight soever
spurr'd

Against us, thou would'st take me gladlier
back,

And make, as ten-times worthier to be
thine

Than twenty Balins, Balan knight. I
have said.

Not so—not all. A man of thine to-day

Abash'd us both, and brake my boast.
Thy will ?'

Said Arthur 'Thou hast everspoken truth ;
Thy too fierce manhood would not let
thee lie.

Rise, my true knight. As children learn,
be thou

Wiser for falling ! walk with me, and
move

To music with thine Order and the King.
Thy chair, a grief to all the brethren,
stands

Vacant, but thou retake it, mine again !'

Thereafter, when Sir Balin enter'd hall,
The Lost one Found was greeted as in
Heaven

With joy that blazed itself in woodland
wealth

Of leaf, and gayest garlandage of flowers,
Along the walls and down the board ;
they sat,

And cup clash'd cup ; they drank and
some one sang,

Sweet-voiced, a song of welcome, where-
upon

Their common shout in chorus, mount-
ing, made

Those banners of twelve battles overhead
Stir, as they stir'd of old, when Arthur's
host

Proclaim'd him Victor, and the day was
won.

Then Balan added to their Order lived
A wealthier life than heretofore with these
And Balin, till their embassy return'd.

'Sir King' they brought report 'we
hardly found,

So bush'd about it is with gloom, the hall
Of him to whom ye sent us, Pellam, once
A Christless foe of thine as ever dash'd
Horse against horse ; but seeing that thy
realm

Hath prosper'd in the name of Christ, the
King

Took, as in rival heat, to holy things ;
And finds himself descended from the
Saint

Arimathæan Joseph ; him who first
 Brought the great faith to Britain over
 seas ;
 He boasts his life as purer than thine
 own ;
 Eats scarce enow to keep his pulse abeat ;
 Hath push'd aside his faithful wife, nor
 lets
 Or dame or damsel enter at his gates
 Lest he should be polluted. This gray
 King
 Show'd us a shrine wherein were wonders
 —yea—
 Rich arks with priceless bones of martyr-
 dom,
 Thorns of the crown and shivers of the
 cross,
 And therewithal (for thus he told us)
 brought
 By holy Joseph hither, that same spear
 Wherewith the Roman pierced the side
 of Christ.
 He much amazed us ; after, when we
 sought
 The tribute, answer'd " I have quite fore-
 gone
 All matters of this world : Garlon, mine
 heir,
 Of him demand it," which this Garlon gave
 With much ado, railing at thine and thee.

 ' But when we left, in those deep woods
 we found
 A knight of thine spear-stricken from
 behind,
 Dead, whom we buried ; more than one
 of us
 Cried out on Garlon, but a woodman
 there
 Reported of some demon in the woods
 Was once a man, who driven by evil
 tongues
 From all his fellows, lived alone, and came
 To learn black magic, and to hate his
 kind
 With such a hate, that when he died, his
 soul
 Became a Fiend, which, as the man in life
 Was wounded by blind tongues he saw
 not whence,

Strikes from behind. This woodman
 show'd the cave
 From which he sallies, and wherein he
 dwelt.

We saw the hoof-print of a horse, no
 more.'

Then Arthur, ' Let who goes before
 me, see

He do not fall behind me : foully slain
 And villainously ! who will hunt for me
 This demon of the woods ? ' Said Balan,
 ' I ! '

So claim'd the quest and rode away, but
 first,

Embracing Balin, ' Good my brother,
 hear !

Let not thy moods prevail, when I am
 gone

Who used to lay them ! hold them outer
 fiends,

Who leap at thee to tear thee ; shake
 them aside,

Dreams ruling when wit sleeps ! yea, but
 to dream

That any of these would wrong thee,
 wrongs thyself.

Witness their flowery welcome. Bound
 are they

To speak no evil. Truly save for fears,
 My fears for thee, so rich a fellowship
 Would make me wholly blest : thou one
 of them,

Be one indeed : consider them, and all
 Their bearing in their common bond of
 love,

No more of hatred than in Heaven itself,
 No more of jealousy than in Paradise.'

So Balan warn'd, and went ; Balin
 remain'd :

Who—for but three brief moons had
 glanced away

From being knighted till he smote the
 thrall,

And faded from the presence into years
 Of exile—now would strictlier set himself
 To learn what Arthur meant by courtesy,
 Manhood, and knighthood ; wherefore
 hover'd round

Lancelot, but when he mark'd his high
sweet smile
In passing, and a transitory word
Make knight or churl or child or damsel
seem
From being smiled at happier in them-
selves—
Sigh'd, as a boy lame-born beneath a
height,
That glooms his valley, sighs to see the
peak
Sun-flush'd, or touch at night the
northern star;
For one from out his village lately
climb'd
And brought report of azure lands and
fair,
Far seen to left and right; and he him-
self
Hath hardly scaled with help a hundred
feet
Up from the base: so Balin marvelling
oft
How far beyond him Lancelot seem'd to
move,
Groan'd, and at times would mutter,
'These be gifts,
Born with the blood, not learnable, divine,
Beyond *my* reach. Well had I foughten
—well—
In those fierce wars, struck hard—and
had I crown'd
With my slain self the heaps of whom I
slew—
So—better!—But this worship of the
Queen,
That honour too wherein she holds him
—this,
This was the sunshine that hath given the
man
A growth, a name that branches o'er the
rest,
And strength against all odds, and what
the King
So prizes—overprizes—gentleness.
Her likewise would I worship an I might.
I never can be close with her, as he
That brought her hither. Shall I pray
the King
To let me bear some token of his Queen

Whereon to gaze, remembering her—
forget
My heats and violences? live afresh?
What, if the Queen disdain'd to grant it!
nay
Being so stately-gentle, would she make
My darkness blackness? and with how
sweet grace
She greeted my return! Bold will I
be—
Some goodly cognizance of Guinevere,
In lieu of this rough beast upon my
shield,
Langued gules, and tooth'd with grinning
savagery.'

And Arthur, when Sir Balin sought
him, said
'What wilt thou bear?' Balin was bold,
and ask'd
To bear her own crown-royal upon shield,
Whereat she smiled and turn'd her to the
King,
Who answer'd 'Thou shalt put the crown
to use.
The crown is but the shadow of the King,
And this a shadow's shadow, let him
have it,
So this will help him of his violences!'
'No shadow' said Sir Balin 'O my
Queen,
But light to me! no shadow, O my King,
But golden earnest of a gentler life!'

So Balin bare the crown, and all the
knights
Approved him, and the Queen, and all
the world
Made music, and he felt his being move
In music with his Order, and the King.

The nightingale, full-toned in middle
May,
Hath ever and anon a note so thin
It seems another voice in other groves;
Thus, after some quick burst of sudden
wrath,
The music in him seem'd to change, and
grow
Faint and far-off.

And once he saw the thrall
His passion half had gauntleted to death,
That causer of his banishment and shame,
Smile at him, as he deem'd, presumptuously :

His arm half rose to strike again, but fell :

The memory of that cognizance on shield
Weighted it down, but in himself he moan'd :

'Too high this mount of Camelot for me :

These high-set courtesies are not for me.
Shall I not rather prove the worse for these ?

Fierier and stormier from restraining,
break

Into some madness ev'n before the Queen ?'

Thus, as a hearth lit in a mountain home,

And glancing on the window, when the gloom

Of twilight deepens round it, seems a flame

That rages in the woodland far below,
So when his moods were darken'd, court and King

And all the kindly warmth of Arthur's hall

Shadow'd an angry distance : yet he strove

To learn the graces of their Table, fought
Hard with himself, and seem'd at length in peace.

Then chanced, one morning, that Sir Balin sat

Close-bower'd in that garden nigh the hall.

A walk of roses ran from door to door ;
A walk of lilies crost it to the bower :

And down that range of roses the great Queen

Came with slow steps, the morning on her face ;

And all in shadow from the counter door
Sir Lancelot as to meet her, then at once,

As if he saw not, glanced aside, and paced

The long white walk of lilies toward the bower.

Follow'd the Queen ; Sir Balin heard her 'Prince,

Art thou so little loyal to thy Queen,
As pass without good morrow to thy Queen ?'

To whom Sir Lancelot with his eyes on earth,

'Fain would I still be loyal to the Queen.'
'Yea so' she said 'but so to pass me by—

So loyal scarce is loyal to thyself,
Whom all men rate the king of courtesy.
Let be : ye stand, fair lord, as in a dream.'

Then Lancelot with his hand among the flowers

'Yea—for a dream. Last night me-thought I saw

That maiden Saint who stands with lily in hand

In yonder shrine. All round her prest the dark,

And all the light upon her silver face
Flow'd from the spiritual lily that she held.

Lo ! these her emblems drew mine eyes—away :

For see, how perfect-pure ! As light a flush

As hardly tints the blossom of the quince
Would mar their charm of stainless maidenhood.'

'Sweeter to me' she said 'this garden rose

Deep-hued and many-folded ! sweeter still

The wild-wood hyacinth and the bloom of May.

Prince, we have ridd'n before among the flowers

In those fair days—not all as cool as these,

Tho' season-earlier. Art thou sad ? or sick ?

Our noble King will send thee his own
leech—

Sick? or for any matter anger'd at me?'

Then Lancelot lifted his large eyes;
they dwelt

Deep-tranced on hers, and could not fall:
her hue

Changed at his gaze: so turning side by
side

They past, and Balin started from his
bower.

'Queen? subject? but I see not what
I see.

Damsel and lover? hear not what I
hear.

My father hath begotten me in his wrath.
I suffer from the things before me, know,
Learn nothing; am not worthy to be
knight;

A churl, a clown!' and in him gloom on
gloom

Deepen'd: he sharply caught his lance
and shield,

Nor stay'd to crave permission of the
King,

But, mad for strange adventure, dash'd
away.

He took the selfsame track as Balan,
saw

The fountain where they sat together,
sigh'd

'Was I not better there with him?' and
rode

The skyless woods, but under open blue
Came on the hoarhead woodman at a
bough

Wearily hewing. 'Churl, thine axe!'
he cried,

Descended, and disjoined it at a blow:
To whom the woodman utter'd wonder-
ingly

'Lord, thou couldst lay the Devil of
these woods

If arm of flesh could lay him.' Balin
cried

'Him, or the viler devil who plays his
part,

To lay that devil would lay the Devil in
me.'

'Nay' said the churl, 'our devil is a
truth,

I saw the flash of him but yestereven.

And some *do* say that our Sir Garlon too
Hath learn'd black magic, and to ride
unseen.

Look to the cave.' But Balin answer'd
him

'Old fabler, these be fancies of the churl,
Look to thy woodcraft,' and so leaving
him,

Now with slack rein and careless of him-
self,

Now with dug spur and raving at him-
self,

Now with droopt brow down the long
glades he rode;

So mark'd not on his right a cavern-chasm
Yawn over darkness, where, nor far
within,

The whole day died, but, dying, gleam'd
on rocks

Roof-pendent, sharp; and others from
the floor,

Tusklike, arising, made that mouth of
night

Whereout the Demon issued up from
Hell.

He mark'd not this, but blind and deaf
to all

Save that chain'd rage, which ever yelp'd
within,

Past eastward from the falling sun. At
once

He felt the hollow-beaten mosses thud
And tremble, and then the shadow of a
spear,

Shot from behind him, ran along the
ground.

Sideways he started from the path, and
saw,

With pointed lance as if to pierce, a
shape,

A light of armour by him flash, and
pass

And vanish in the woods; and follow'd
this,

But all so blind in rage that unawares

He burst his lance against a forest bough,
Dishorsed himself, and rose again, and
fled

Far, till the castle of a King, the hall
Of Pellam, lichen-bearded, grayly draped
With streaming grass, appear'd, low-built
but strong ;

The ruinous donjon as a knoll of moss,
The battlement overtopped with ivytods,
A home of bats, in every tower an owl.

Then spake the men of Pellam crying
'Lord,

Why wear ye this crown-royal upon
shield ?'

Said Balin 'For the fairest and the best
Of ladies living gave me this to bear.'
So stall'd his horse, and strode across the
court,

But found the greetings both of knight
and King

Faint in the low dark hall of banquet :
leaves

Laid their green faces flat against the
panes,

Sprays grated, and the canker'd boughs
without

Whined in the wood ; for all was hush'd
within,

Till when at feast Sir Garlon likewise
ask'd

'Why wear ye that crown-royal ?' Balin
said

'The Queen we worship, Lancelot, I,
and all,

As fairest, best and purest, granted me
To bear it !' Such a sound (for Arthur's

knights
Were hated strangers in the hall) as
makes

The white swan-mother, sitting, when she
hears

A strange knee rustle thro' her secret
reeds,

Made Garlon, hissing ; then he sourly
smiled.

'Fairest I grant her : I have seen ; but
best,

Best, purest ? *thou* from Arthur's hall,
and yet

So simple ! hast thou eyes, or if, are these
So far besotted that they fail to see
This fair wife-worship cloaks a secret
shame ?

Truly, ye men of Arthur be but babes.'

A goblet on the board by Balin, boss'd
With holy Joseph's legend, on his right
Stood, all of massiest bronze : one side
had sea

And ship and sail and angels blowing on
it :

And one was rough with wattling, and
the walls

Of that low church he built at Glaston-
bury.

This Balin graspt, but while in act to
hurl,

Thro' memory of that token on the
shield

Relax'd his hold : 'I will be gentle' he
thought

'And passing gentle' caught his hand
away

Then fiercely to Sir Garlon 'Eyes have I
That saw to-day the shadow of a spear,

Shot from behind me, run along the
ground ;

Eyes too that long have watch'd how
Lancelot draws

From homage to the best and purest,
might,

Name, manhood, and a grace, but scanty
thine,

Who, sitting in thine own hall, canst
endure

To mouth so huge a foulness—to thy
guest,

Me, me of Arthur's Table. Felon talk !
Let be ! no more !'

But not the less by night
The scorn of Garlon, poisoning all his
rest,

Stung him in dreams. At length, and
dim thro' leaves

Blinkt the white morn, sprays grated,
and old boughs

Whined in the wood. He rose, de-
scended, met

The scorner in the castle court, and fain,
 For hate and loathing, would have past
 him by ;
 But when Sir Garlon utter'd mocking-
 wise ;
 'What, wear ye still that same crown-
 scandalous ?'
 His countenance blacken'd, and his
 forehead veins
 Bloated, and branch'd ; and tearing out
 of sheath
 The brand, Sir Balin with a fiery 'Ha !
 So thou be shadow, here I make thee
 ghost,'
 Hard upon helm smote him, and the
 blade flew
 Splintering in six, and clinkt upon the
 stones.
 Then Garlon, reeling slowly backward,
 fell,
 And Balin by the banneret of his helm
 Dragg'd him, and struck, but from the
 castle a cry
 Sounded across the court, and—men-at-
 arms,
 A score with pointed lances, making at
 him—
 He dash'd the pummel at the foremost
 face,
 Beneath a low door dipt, and made his
 feet
 Wings thro' a glimmering gallery, till he
 mark'd
 The portal of King Pellam's chapel wide
 And inward to the wall ; he stept behind ;
 Thence in a moment heard them pass
 like wolves
 Howling ; but while he stared about the
 shrine,
 In which he scarce could spy the Christ
 for Saints,
 Beheld before a golden altar lie
 The longest lance his eyes had ever seen,
 Point-painted red ; and seizing thereupon
 Push'd thro' an open casement down,
 lean'd on it,
 Leapt in a semicircle, and lit on earth ;
 Then hand at ear, and harkening from
 what side
 The blindfold rummage buried in the walls

Might echo, ran the counter path, and
 found
 His charger, mounted on him and away.
 An arrow whizz'd to the right, one to
 the left,
 One overhead ; and Pellam's feeble cry
 'Stay, stay him ! he defileth heavenly
 things
 With earthly uses'—made him quickly
 dive
 Beneath the boughs, and race thro' many
 a mile
 Of dense and open, till his goodly horse,
 Arising wearily at a fallen oak,
 Stumbled headlong, and cast him face to
 ground.

Half-wroth he had not ended, but all
 glad,
 Knightlike, to find his charger yet un-
 lamed,
 Sir Balin drew the shield from off his neck,
 Stared at the priceless cognizance, and
 thought
 'I have shamed thee so that now thou
 shamest me,
 Thee will I bear no more,' high on a
 branch
 Hung it, and turn'd aside into the woods,
 And there in gloom cast himself all
 along,
 Moaning 'My violences, my violences !'

But now the wholesome music of the
 wood
 Was dumb'd by one from out the hall of
 Mark
 A damsel-errant, warbling, as she rode
 The woodland alleys, Vivien, with her
 Squire.

'The fire of Heaven has kill'd the barren
 cold,
 And kindled all the plain and all the
 wold.
 The new leaf ever pushes off the old.
 The fire of Heaven is not the flame of
 Hell.

'Old priest, who mumble worship in
 your quire—

Old monk and nun, ye scorn the world's
 desire,
 Yet in your frosty cells ye feel the fire !
 The fire of Heaven is not the flame of
 Hell.

‘The fire of Heaven is on the dusty
 ways.
 The wayside blossoms open to the blaze.
 The whole wood-world is one full peal
 of praise.
 The fire of Heaven is not the flame of
 Hell.

‘The fire of Heaven is lord of all things
 good,
 And starve not thou this fire within thy
 blood,
 But follow Vivien thro’ the fiery flood !
 The fire of Heaven is not the flame of
 Hell !’

Then turning to her Squire ‘This fire
 of Heaven,
 This old sun-worship, boy, will rise again,
 And beat the cross to earth, and break
 the King
 And all his Table.’

Then they reach’d a glade,
 Where under one long lane of cloudless
 air
 Before another wood, the royal crown
 Sparkled, and swaying upon a restless elm
 Drew the vague glance of Vivien, and her
 Squire ;
 Amazed were these ; ‘Lo there’ she
 cried—‘a crown—
 Borne by some high lord-prince of
 Arthur’s hall,
 And there a horse ! the rider ? where is
 he ?
 See, yonder lies one dead within the
 wood.
 Not dead ; he stirs !—but sleeping. I
 will speak.
 Hail, royal knight, we break on thy sweet
 rest,
 Not, doubtless, all unearn’d by noble
 deeds.

But bounden art thou, if from Arthur’s
 hall,
 To help the weak. Behold, I fly from
 shame,
 A lustful King, who sought to win my
 love
 Thro’ evil ways : the knight, with whom
 I rode,
 Hath suffer’d misadventure, and my
 squire
 Hath in him small defence ; but thou,
 Sir Prince,
 Wilt surely guide me to the warrior King,
 Arthur the blameless, pure as any maid,
 To get me shelter for my maidenhood.
 I charge thee by that crown upon thy
 shield,
 And by the great Queen’s name, arise
 and hence.’

And Balin rose, ‘Thither no more !
 nor Prince
 Nor knight am I, but one that hath
 defamed
 The cognizance she gave me : here I
 dwell
 Savage among the savage woods, here
 die—
 Die : let the wolves’ black maws en-
 sepulchre
 Their brother beast, whose anger was his
 lord.
 O me, that such a name as Guinevere’s,
 Which our high Lancelot hath so lifted
 up,
 And been thereby uplifted, should thro’
 me,
 My violence, and my villainy, come to
 shame.’

Thereat she suddenly laugh’d and
 shrill, anon
 Sigh’d all as suddenly. Said Balin to her
 ‘Is this thy courtesy—to mock me, ha ?
 Hence, for I will not with thee.’ Again
 she sigh’d
 ‘Pardon, sweet lord ! we maidens often
 laugh
 When sick at heart, when rather we
 should weep.

I knew thee wrong'd. I brake upon thy
rest,
And now full loth am I to break thy
dream,
But thou art man, and canst abide a truth,
Tho' bitter. Hither, boy—and mark me
well.
Dost thou remember at Caerleon once—
A year ago—nay, then I love thee not—
Ay, thou rememberest well—one summer
dawn—
By the great tower—Caerleon upon
Usk—
Nay, truly we were hidden: this fair
lord,
The flower of all their vestal knighthood,
knelt
In amorous homage—knelt—what else?
—O ay
Knelt, and drew down from out his
night-black hair
And mumbled that white hand whose
ring'd caress
Had wander'd from her own King's
golden head,
And lost itself in darkness, till she
cried—
I thought the great tower would crash
down on both—
“Rise, my sweet King, and kiss me on
the lips,
Thou art my King.” This lad, whose
lightest word
Is mere white truth in simple nakedness,
Saw them embrace: he reddens, cannot
speak,
So bashful, he! but all the maiden Saints,
The deathless mother-maidenhood of
Heaven,
Cry out upon her. Up then, ride with
me!
Talk not of shame! thou canst not, an
thou would'st,
Do these more shame than these have
done themselves.'

She lied with ease; but horror-stricken
he,
Remembering that dark bower at Camelot,
Breathed in a dismal whisper 'It is truth.'

Sunnily she smiled 'And even in this
lone wood,
Sweet lord, ye do right well to whisper
this.
Fools prate, and perish traitors. Woods
have tongues,
As walls have ears: but thou shalt go
with me,
And we will speak at first exceeding
low.
Meet is it the good King be not deceived.
See now, I set thee high on vantage
ground,
From whence to watch the time, and
eagle-like
Stoop at thy will on Lancelot and the
Queen.'

She ceased; his evil spirit upon him
leapt,
He ground his teeth together, sprang
with a yell,
Tore from the branch, and cast on earth,
the shield,
Drove his mail'd heel athwart the royal
crown,
Stamp'd all into defacement, hurl'd it from
him
Among the forest weeds, and cursed the
tale,
The told-of, and the teller.

That weird yell,
Unearthlier than all shriek of bird or
beast,
Thrill'd thro' the woods; and Balan
lurking there
(His quest was unaccomplish'd) heard
and thought
'The scream of that Wood-devil I came
to quell!'
Then nearing 'Lo! he hath slain some
brother-knight,
And tramples on the goodly shield to
show
His loathing of our Order and the Queen.
My quest, meseems, is here. Or devil
or man
Guard thou thine head.' Sir Balin spake
not word,

But snatch'd a sudden buckler from the
 Squire,
 And vaulted on his horse, and so they
 crash'd
 In onset, and King Pellam's holy spear,
 Reputed to be red with sinless blood,
 Redden'd at once with sinful, for the
 point
 Across the maiden shield of Balan prick'd
 The hauberk to the flesh; and Balin's
 horse
 Was wearied to the death, and, when
 they clash'd,
 Rolling back upon Balin, crush'd the man
 Inward, and either fell, and swoon'd
 away.

Then to her Squire mutter'd the
 damsel 'Fools!
 This fellow hath wrought some foulness
 with his Queen:
 Else never had he borne her crown, nor
 raved
 And thus foam'd over at a rival name:
 But thou, Sir Chick, that scarce hast
 broken shell,
 Art yet half-yolk, not even come to
 down—
 Who never sawest Caerleon upon Usk—
 And yet hast often pleaded for my love—
 See what I see, be thou where I have
 been,
 Or else Sir Chick—dismount and loose
 their casques
 I fain would know what manner of men
 they be.'
 And when the Squire had loosed them,
 'Goodly!—look!
 They might have cropt the myriad flower
 of May,
 And butt each other here, like brainless
 bulls,
 Dead for one heifer!'

Then the gentle Squire
 'I hold them happy, so they died for
 love:
 And, Vivien, tho' ye beat me like your
 dog,
 I too could die, as now I live, for thee.'

'Live on, Sir Boy,' she cried. 'I
 better prize
 The living dog than the dead lion: away!
 I cannot brook to gaze upon the dead.'
 Then leapt her palfrey o'er the fallen oak,
 And bounding forward 'Leave them to
 the wolves.'

But when their foreheads felt the cool-
 ing air,
 Balin first woke, and seeing that true face,
 Familiar up from cradle-time, so wan,
 Crawl'd slowly with low moans to where
 he lay,
 And on his dying brother cast himself
 Dying; and *he* lifted faint eyes; he felt
 One near him; all at once they found the
 world,
 Staring wild-wide; then with a childlike
 wail,
 And drawing down the dim disastrous
 brow
 That o'er him hung, he kiss'd it, moan'd
 and spake;

'O Balin, Balin, I that fain had died
 To save thy life, have brought thee to thy
 death.
 Why had ye not the shield I knew? and
 why
 Trampled ye thus on that which bare the
 Crown?'

Then Balin told him brokenly, and in
 gasps,
 All that had chanced, and Balan moan'd
 again.

'Brother, I dwelt a day in Pellam's
 hall:
 This Garlon mock'd me, but I heeded
 not.
 And one said "Eat in peace! a liar is he,
 And hates thee for the tribute!" this
 good knight
 Told me, that twice a wanton damsel
 came,
 And sought for Garlon at the castle-gates,
 Whom Pellam drove away with holy
 heat.

I well believe this damsel, and the one
Who stood beside thee even now, the
same.

"She dwells among the woods" he said
"and meets

And dallies with him in the Mouth of
Hell."

Foul are their lives; foul are their lips;
they lied.

Pure as our own true Mother is our
Queen.'

'O brother' answer'd Balin 'woe is
me!

My madness all thy life has been thy
doom,

Thy curse, and darken'd all thy day;
and now

The night has come. I scarce can see
thee now.

Goodnight! for we shall never bid again
Goodmorrow—Dark my doom was here,
and dark

It will be there. I see thee now no
more.

I would not mine again should darken
thine,

Goodnight, true brother.'

Balan answer'd low

'Goodnight, true brother here! good-
morrow there!

We two were born together, and we
die

Together by one doom': and while he
spoke

Closed his death-drowsing eyes, and slept
the sleep

With Balin, either lock'd in either's arm.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN

A STORM was coming, but the winds
were still,

And in the wild woods of Broceliande,
Before an oak, so hollow, huge and old
It look'd a tower of ivied masonwork,
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay.

For he that always bare in bitter
grudge

The slights of Arthur and his Table, Mark
The Cornish King, had heard a wandering
voice,

A minstrel of Caerleon by strong storm
Blown into shelter at Tintagil, say
That out of naked knightlike purity
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl
But the great Queen herself, fought in her
name,

Sware by her—vows like theirs, that high
in heaven

Love most, but neither marry, nor are
given

In marriage, angels of our Lord's report.

He ceased, and then—for Vivien
sweetly said

(She sat beside the banquet nearest Mark),
'And is the fair example follow'd, Sir,
In Arthur's household?'—answer'd inno-
cently:

'Ay, by some few—ay, truly—youths
that hold

It more beseems the perfect virgin knight
To worship woman as true wife beyond
All hopes of gaining, than as maiden girl.
They place their pride in Lancelot and
the Queen.

So passionate for an utter purity
Beyond the limit of their bond, are these,
For Arthur bound them not to singleness.
Brave hearts and clean! and yet—God
guide them—young.'

Then Mark was half in heart to hurl
his cup
Straight at the speaker, but forbore: he
rose

To leave the hall, and, Vivien following
him,

Turn'd to her: 'Here are snakes within
the grass;

And you methinks, O Vivien, save ye fear
The monkish manhood, and the mask of
pure

Worn by this court, can stir them till they
sting.'

And Vivien answer'd, smiling scorn-
full
'Why fear? because that foster'd at *thy*
court
I savour of thy—virtues? fear them? no.
As Love, if Love be perfect, casts out
fear,
So Hate, if Hate be perfect, casts out
fear.
My father died in battle against the King,
My mother on his corpse in open field;
She bore me there, for born from death
was I
Among the dead and sown upon the
wind—
And then on thee! and shown the truth
betimes,
That old true filth, and bottom of the well,
Where Truth is hidden. Gracious lessons
thine
And maxims of the mud! "This Arthur
pure!
Great Nature thro' the flesh herself hath
made
Gives him the lie! There is no being
pure,
My cherub; saith not Holy Writ the
same?"—
If I were Arthur, I would have thy blood.
Thy blessing, stainless King! I bring
thee back,
When I have ferreted out their burrow-
ings,
The hearts of all this Order in mine
hand—
Ay—so that fate and craft and folly close,
Perchance, one curl of Arthur's golden
beard.
To me this narrow grizzled fork of thine
Is cleaner-fashion'd—Well, I loved thee
first,
That warps the wit.'

Loud laugh'd the graceless Mark.
But Vivien, into Camelot stealing, lodged
Low in the city, and on a festal day
When Guinevere was crossing the great
hall
Cast herself down, knelt to the Queen,
and wail'd.

'Why kneel ye there? What evil have
ye wrought?
Rise!' and the damsel bidden rise arose
And stood with folded hands and down-
ward eyes
Of glancing corner, and all meekly said,
'None wrought, but suffer'd much, an
orphan maid!
My father died in battle for thy King,
My mother on his corpse—in open field,
The sad sea-sounding wastes of Lyon-
nesse—
Poor wretch—no friend!—and now by
Mark the King
For that small charm of feature mine,
pursued—
If any such be mine—I fly to thee.
Save, save me thou—Woman of women—
thine
The wreath of beauty, thine the crown of
power,
Be thine the balm of pity, O Heaven's
own white
Earth-angel, stainless bride of stainless
King—
Help, for he follows! take me to thyself!
O yield me shelter for mine innocence
Among thy maidens!'

Here her slow sweet eyes
Fear-tremulous, but humbly hopeful, rose
Fixt on her hearer's, while the Queen
who stood
All glittering like May sunshine on May
leaves
In green and gold, and plumed with green
replied,
'Peace, child! of overpraise and over-
blame
We choose the last. Our noble Arthur,
him
Ye scarce can overpraise, will hear and
know.
Nay—we believe all evil of thy Mark—
Well, we shall test thee farther; but this
hour
We ride a-hawking with Sir Lancelot.
He hath given us a fair falcon which he
train'd;
We go to prove it. Bide ye here the while.'

She past ; and Vivien murmur'd after
 'Go !
 I bide the while.' Then thro' the portal-
 arch
 Peering askance, and muttering broken-
 wise,
 As one that labours with an evil dream,
 Beheld the Queen and Lancelot get to
 horse.

'Is that the Lancelot? goodly—ay, but
 gaunt :
 Courteous—amends for gauntness—takes
 her hand—
 That glance of theirs, but for the street,
 had been
 A clinging kiss—how hand lingers in
 hand !
 Let go at last !—they ride away—to hawk
 For waterfowl. Royaller game is mine.
 For such a supersensual sensual bond
 As that gray cricket chirpt of at our
 hearth—
 Touch flax with flame—a glance will serve
 —the liars !
 Ah little rat that borest in the dyke
 Thy hole by night to let the boundless
 deep
 Down upon far-off cities while they
 dance—
 Or dream—of thee they dream'd not—
 nor of me
 These—ay, but each of either : ride, and
 dream
 The mortal dream that never yet was
 mine—
 Ride, ride and dream until ye wake—to
 me !
 Then, narrow court and lubber King,
 farewell !
 For Lancelot will be gracious to the rat,
 And our wise Queen, if knowing that I
 know,
 Will hate, loathe, fear—but honour me
 the more.'

Yet while they rode together down the
 plain,
 Their talk was all of training, terms of art,
 Diet and seeling, jesses, leash and lure.

'She is too noble' he said 'to check at
 pies,
 Nor will she rake : there is no baseness
 in her.'
 Here when the Queen demanded as by
 chance
 'Know ye the stranger woman?' 'Let
 her be,'
 Said Lancelot and unhooded casting off
 The goodly falcon free ; she tower'd ;
 her bells,
 Tone under tone, shrill'd ; and they lifted
 up
 Their eager faces, wondering at the
 strength,
 Boldness and royal knighthood of the bird
 Who pounced her quarry and slew it.
 Many a time
 As once—of old—among the flowers—
 they rode.

But Vivien half-forgotten of the Queen
 Among her damsels broidering sat, heard,
 watch'd
 And whisper'd : thro' the peaceful court
 she crept
 And whisper'd : then as Arthur in the
 highest
 Leaven'd the world, so Vivien in the
 lowest,
 Arriving at a time of golden rest,
 And sowing one ill hint from ear to ear,
 While all the heathen lay at Arthur's feet,
 And no quest came, but all was joust and
 play,
 Leaven'd his hall. They heard and let
 her be.

Thereafter as an enemy that has left
 Death in the living waters, and with-
 drawn,
 The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court.

She hated all the knights, and heard in
 thought
 Their lavish comment when her name
 was named.
 For once, when Arthur walking all alone,
 Vext at a rumour issued from herself
 Of some corruption crept among his
 knights,

Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,
 Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy
 mood
 With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken
 voice,
 And flutter'd adoration, and at last
 With dark sweet hints of some who
 prized him more
 Than who should prize him most ; at
 which the King
 Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by :
 But one had watch'd, and had not held
 his peace :
 It made the laughter of an afternoon
 That Vivien should attempt the blameless
 King.
 And after that, she set herself to gain
 Him, the most famous man of all those
 times,
 Merlin, who knew the range of all their
 arts,
 Had built the King his havens, ships,
 and halls,
 Was also Bard, and knew the starry
 heavens ;
 The people call'd him Wizard ; whom at
 first
 She play'd about with slight and sprightly
 talk,
 And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom'd
 points
 Of slander, glancing here and grazing
 there ;
 And yielding to his kindlier moods, the
 Seer
 Would watch her at her petulance, and
 play,
 Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and
 laugh
 As those that watch a kitten ; thus he
 grew
 Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and
 she,
 Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,
 Began to break her sports with graver fits,
 Turn red or pale, would often when they
 met
 Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him
 With such a fixt devotion, that the old
 man,

Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at
 times
 Would flatter his own wish in age for love,
 And half believe her true : for thus at
 times
 He waver'd ; but that other clung to him,
 Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went.

Then fell on Merlina great melancholy ;
 He walk'd with dreams and darkness,
 and he found
 A doom that ever poised itself to fall,
 An ever-moaning battle in the mist,
 World-war of dying flesh against the life,
 Death in all life and lying in all love,
 The meanest having power upon the
 highest,
 And the high purpose broken by the
 worm.

So leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the
 beach ;
 There found a little boat, and stept into
 it ;
 And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her
 not.
 She took the helm and he the sail ; the
 boat
 Drave with a sudden wind across the
 deeps,
 And touching Breton sands, they dis-
 embark'd.
 And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
 Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceliande.
 For Merlin once had told her of a charm,
 The which if any wrought on anyone
 With woven paces and with waving arms,
 The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie
 Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,
 From which was no escape for evermore ;
 And none could find that man for ever-
 more,
 Nor could he see but him who wrought
 the charm
 Coming and going, and he lay as dead
 And lost to life and use and name and
 fame.
 And Vivien ever sought to work the
 charm
 Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,

As fancying that her glory would be great
According to his greatness whom she
quench'd.

There lay she all her length and kiss'd
his feet,
As if in deepest reverence and in love.
A twist of gold was round her hair; a
robe
Of samite without price, that more exprest
Than hid her, clung about her lissome
limbs,
In colour like the satin-shining palm
On sallows in the windy gleams of March:
And while she kiss'd them, crying,
'Trample me,
Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the
world,
And I will pay you worship; tread me
down
And I will kiss you for it'; he was mute:
So dark a forethought roll'd about his
brain,
As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long
sea-hall
In silence: wherefore, when she lifted up
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and again,
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and once
more,
'Great Master, do ye love me?' he was
mute.
And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him, slid up his knee
and sat,
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake; and letting her left
hand
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to
part
The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes: then he spoke and said,
Not looking at her, 'Who are wise in love
Love most, say least,' and Vivien an-
swer'd quick,
'I saw the little elf-god eyeless once
In Arthur's arras hall at Camelot:

But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid
child!

Yet you are wise who say it, let me think
Silence is wisdom: I am silent then,
And ask no kiss'; then adding all at once,
'And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom,'
drew

The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,
And call'd herself a gilded summer fly
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,
Who meant to eat her up in that wild
wood

Without one word. So Vivien call'd
herself,

But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star
Veil'd in gray vapour; till he sadly
smiled:

'To what request for what strange boon,'
he said,

'Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,
O Vivien, the preamble? yet my thanks,
For these have broken up my melancholy.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily,
'What, O my Master, have ye found
your voice?

I bid the stranger welcome. Thanks at
last!

But yesterday you never open'd lip,
Except indeed to drink: no cup had we:
In mine own lady palms I cull'd the
spring

That gather'd trickling dropwise from
the cleft,

And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer'd you it kneeling: then you
drank

And knew no more, nor gave me one
poor word;

O no more thanks than might a goat have
given

With no more sign of reverence than a
beard.

And when we halted at that other well,
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay
Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust of
those

Deep meadows we had traversed, did
you know

That Vivien bathed your feet before her
own ?

And yet no thanks : and all thro' this
wild wood

And all this morning when I fondled you :
Boon, ay, there was a boon, one not so
strange—

How had I wrong'd you ? surely ye are
wise,

But such a silence is more wise than
kind.'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers
and said :

'O did ye never lie upon the shore,
And watch the curl'd white of the coming
wave

Glass'd in the slippery sand before it
breaks ?

Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable,
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.
And then I rose and fled from Arthur's
court

To break the mood. You follow'd me
unask'd ;

And when I look'd, and saw you follow-
ing still,

My mind involved yourself the nearest
thing

In that mind-mist : for shall I tell you
truth ?

You seem'd that wave about to break upon
me

And sweep me from my hold upon the
world,

My use and name and fame. Your pardon,
child,

Your pretty sports have brighten'd all
again.

And ask your boon, for boon I owe you
thrice,

Once for wrong done you by confusion,
next

For thanks it seems till now neglected,
last

For these your dainty gambols : wherefore
ask ;

And take this boon so strange and not so
strange.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mourn-
fully :

'O not so strange as my long asking it,
Not yet so strange as you yourself are
strange,

Nor half so strange as that dark mood of
yours.

I ever fear'd ye were not wholly mine ;
And see, yourself have own'd ye did me
wrong.

The people call you prophet : let it be :
But not of those that can expound them-
selves.

Take Vivien for expounder ; she will call
That three-days-long presageful gloom of
yours

No presage, but the same mistrustful mood
That makes you seem less noble than
yourself,

Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,
Now ask'd again : for see you not, dear
love,

That such a mood as that, which lately
gloom'd

Your fancy when ye saw me following
you,

Must make me fear still more you are not
mine,

Must make me yearn still more to prove
you mine,

And make me wish still more to learn
this charm

Of woven paces and of waving hands,
As proof of trust. O Merlin, teach it me.
The charm so taught will charm us both
to rest.

For, grant me some slight power upon
your fate,

I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you
mine.

And therefore be as great as ye are named,
Not muffled round with selfish reticence.
How hard you look and how denyingly !
O, if you think this wickedness in me,
That I should prove it on you unawares,
That makes me passing wrathful ; then
our bond

Had best be loosed for ever : but think
or not,

By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean
truth,
As clean as blood of babes, as white as
milk :

O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,
Ev'n in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,
Have tript on such conjectural treachery—
May this hard earth cleave to the Nadir
hell

Down, down, and close again, and nip
me flat,

If I be such a traitress. Yield my boon,
Till which I scarce can yield you all I am;
And grant my re-reiterated wish,
The great proof of your love : because I
think,
However wise, ye hardly know me yet.'

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers
and said,

'I never was less wise, however wise,
Too curious Vivien, tho' you talk of trust,
Than when I told you first of such a
charm.

Yea, if ye talk of trust I tell you this,
Too much I trusted when I told you that,
And stir'd this vice in you which ruin'd
man

Thro' woman the first hour ; for howso'er
In children a great curiousness be well,
Who have to learn themselves and all the
world,

In you, that are no child, for still I find
Your face is practised when I spell the
lines,

I call it,—well, I will not call it vice :
But since you name yourself the summer
fly,

I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,
That settles, beaten back, and beaten back
Settles, till one could yield for weariness :
But since I will not yield to give you power
Upon my life and use and name and fame,
Why will ye never ask some other boon ?
Yea, by God's rood, I trusted you too much.'

And Vivien, like the tenderest-hearted
maid
That ever bided tryst at village stile,

Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears :
'Nay, Master, be not wrathful with your
maid ;

Caress her : let her feel herself forgiven
Who feels no heart to ask another boon.
I think ye hardly know the tender rhyme
Of "trust me not at all or all in all."
I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,
And it shall answer for me. Listen to it.

"In Love, if Love be Love, if Love
be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal
powers :
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

"It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

"The little rift within the lover's lute
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

"It is not worth the keeping : let it go :
But shall it ? answer, darling, answer, no.
And trust me not at all or all in all."

O Master, do ye love my tender rhyme ?'

And Merlin look'd and half believed
her true,
So tender was her voice, so fair her face,
So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her
tears

Like sunlight on the plain behind a
shower :

And yet he answer'd half indignantly :

'Far other was the song that once I
heard

By this huge oak, sung nearly whereso'er it :
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,
To chase a creature that was current then
In these wild woods, the hart with golden
horns.

It was the time when first the question
rose

About the founding of a Table Round,
That was to be, for love of God and men
And noble deeds, the flower of all the
world.

And each incited each to noble deeds.
 And while we waited, one, the youngest
 of us,
 We could not keep him silent, out he
 flash'd,
 And into such a song, such fire for fame,
 Such trumpet-blowings in it, coming down
 To such a stern and iron-clashing close,
 That when he stopt we long'd to hurl
 together,
 And should have done it; but the beau-
 teous beast
 Scared by the noise upstart'd at our feet,
 And like a silver shadow slipt away
 Thro' the dim land; and all day long we
 rode
 Thro' the dim land against a rushing
 wind,
 That glorious roundel echoing in our
 ears,
 And chased the flashes of his golden horns
 Until they vanish'd by the fairy well
 That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—
 Where children cast their pins and nails,
 and cry,
 “Laugh, little well!” but touch it with
 a sword,
 It buzzes fiercely round the point; and
 there
 We lost him: such a noble song was that.
 But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet
 rhyme,
 I felt as tho' you knew this cursed charm,
 Were proving it on me, and that I lay
 And felt them slowly ebbing, name and
 fame.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mourn-
 fully:
 ‘O mine have ebb'd away for evermore,
 And all thro' following you to this wild
 wood,
 Because I saw you sad, to comfort you.
 Lo now, what hearts have men! they
 never mount
 As high as woman in her selfless mood.
 And touching fame, howe'er ye scorn my
 song,
 Take one verse more—the lady speaks it
 —this:

“My name, once mine, now thine, is
 closelier mine,
 For fame, could fame be mine, that fame
 were thine,
 And shame, could shame be thine, that
 shame were mine.
 So trust me not at all or all in all.”

‘Says she not well? and there is more
 —this rhyme
 Is like the fair pearl-necklace of the
 Queen,
 That burst in dancing, and the pearls
 were spilt;
 Some lost, some stolen, some as relics
 kept.
 But nevermore the same two sister pearls
 Ran down the silken thread to kiss each
 other
 On her white neck—so is it with this
 rhyme:
 It lives dispersedly in many hands,
 And every minstrel sings it differently;
 Yet is there one true line, the pearl of
 pearls:
 “Man dreams of Fame while woman
 wakes to love.”
 Yea! Love, tho' Love were of the gross-
 est, carves
 A portion from the solid present, eats
 And uses, careless of the rest; but Fame,
 The Fame that follows death is nothing
 to us;
 And what is Fame in life but half-disfame,
 And counterchanged with darkness? ye
 yourself
 Know well that Envy calls you Devil's
 son,
 And since ye seem the Master of all Art,
 They fain would make you Master of all
 vice.'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and
 said,
 ‘I once was looking for a magic weed,
 And found a fair young squire who sat
 alone,
 Had carved himself a knightly shield of
 wood,
 And then was painting on it fancied arms,

Azure, an Eagle rising or, the Sun
In dexter chief; the scroll "I follow
fame."

And speaking not, but leaning over him,
I took his brush and blotted out the bird,
And made a Gardener putting in a graff,
With this for motto, "Rather use than
fame."

You should have seen him blush; but
afterwards

He made a stalwart knight. O Vivien,
For you, methinks you think you love me
well;

For me, I love you somewhat; rest: and
Love

Should have some rest and pleasure in
himself,

Not ever be too curious for a boon,
Too prurient for a proof against the grain
Of him ye say ye love: but Fame with
men,

Being but ampler means to serve man-
kind,

Should have small rest or pleasure in
herself,

But work as vassal to the larger love,
That dwarfs the petty love of one to one.
Use gave me Fame at first, and Fame
again

Increasing gave me use. Lo, there my
boon!

What other? for men sought to prove me
vile,

Because I fain had given them greater
wits:

And then did Envy call me Devil's son:
The sick weak beast seeking to help her-
self

By striking at her better, miss'd, and
brought

Her own claw back, and wounded her
own heart.

Sweet were the days when I was all un-
known,

But when my name was lifted up, the
storm

Brake on the mountain and I cared not
for it.

Right well know I that Fame is half-
disfame,

Yet needs must work my work. That
other fame,

To one at least, who hath not children,
vague,

The cackle of the unborn about the grave,
I cared not for it: a single misty star,
Which is the second in a line of stars
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
I never gazed upon it but I dreamt
Of some vast charm concluded in that star
To make fame nothing. Wherefore, if I
fear,

Giving you power upon me thro' this
charm,

That you might play me falsely, having
power,

However well ye think ye love me now
(As sons of kings loving in pupillage
Have turn'd to tyrants when they came
to power)

I rather dread the loss of use than fame;
If you—and not so much from wickedness,
As some wild turn of anger, or a mood
Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,
To keep me all to your own self,—or else
A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,—
Should try this charm on whom ye say ye
love.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in
wrath:

'Have I not sworn? I am not trusted.
Good!

Well, hide it, hide it; I shall find it out;
And being found take heed of Vivien.

A woman and not trusted, doubtless I
Might feel some sudden turn of anger born
Of your misfaith; and your fine epithet
Is accurate too, for this full love of mine
Without the full heart back may merit well
Your term of overstrain'd. So used as I,
My daily wonder is, I love at all.

And as to woman's jealousy, O why not?
O to what end, except a jealous one,
And one to make me jealous if I love,
Was this fair charm invented by yourself?
I well believe that all about this world
Ye cage a buxom captive here and there,
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower
From which is no escape for evermore.'

Then the great Master merrily answer'd
 her :
 ' Full many a love in loving youth was
 mine ;
 I needed then no charm to keep them mine
 But youth and love ; and that full heart
 of yours
 Whereof ye prattle, may now assure you
 mine ;
 So live uncharm'd. For those who
 wrought it first,
 The wrist is parted from the hand that
 waved,
 The feet unmortised from their ankle-
 bones
 Who paced it, ages back : but will ye hear
 The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme ?

' There lived a king in the most Eastern
 East,
 Less old than I, yet older, for my blood
 Hath earnest in it of far springs to be.
 A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,
 Whose bark had plunder'd twenty name-
 less isles ;
 And passing one, at the high peep of
 dawn,
 He saw two cities in a thousand boats
 All fighting for a woman on the sea.
 And pushing his black craft among them
 all,
 He lightly scatter'd theirs and brought
 her off,
 With loss of half his people arrow-slain ;
 A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,
 They said a light came from her when she
 moved :
 And since the pirate would not yield her
 up,
 The King impaled him for his piracy ;
 Then made her Queen : but those isle-
 nurtured eyes
 Waged such unwilling tho' successful war
 On all the youth, they sicken'd ; counchils
 thinn'd,
 And armies waned, for magnet-like she
 drew
 The rustiest iron of old fighters' hearts ;
 And beasts themselves would worship ;
 camels knelt

Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain
 back
 That carry kings in castles, bow'd black
 knees
 Of homage, ringing with their serpent
 hands,
 To make her smile, her golden ankle-bells.
 What wonder, being jealous, that he sent
 His horns of proclamation out thro' all
 The hundred under-kingdoms that he
 sway'd
 To find a wizard who might teach the King
 Some charm, which being wrought upon
 the Queen
 Might keep her all his own : to such a one
 He promised more than ever king has
 given,
 A league of mountain full of golden mines,
 A province with a hundred miles of coast,
 A palace and a princess, all for him :
 But on all those who tried and fail'd, the
 King
 Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning
 by it
 To keep the list low and pretenders back,
 Or like a king, not to be trifled with—
 Their heads should moulder on the city
 gates.
 And many tried and fail'd, because the
 charm
 Of nature in her overbore their own :
 And many a wizard brow bleach'd on the
 walls :
 And many weeks a troop of carrion crows
 Hung like a cloud above the gateway
 towers.'

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said :
 ' I sit and gather honey ; yet, methinks,
 Thy tongue has tript a little : ask thyself.
 The lady never made *unwilling* war
 With those fine eyes : she had her pleasure
 in it,
 And made her good man jealous with good
 cause.
 And lived there neither dame nor damsel
 then
 Wroth at a lover's loss ? were all as tame,
 I mean, as noble, as their Queen was fair ?
 Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,

Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
Or make her paler with a poison'd rose?
Well, those were not our days: but did
they find

A wizard? Tell me, was he like to thee?'

She ceased, and made her lithe arm
round his neck

Tighten, and then drew back, and let her
eyes

Speak for her, glowing on him, like a
bride's

On her new lord, her own, the first of men.

He answer'd laughing, 'Nay, not like
to me.

At last they found—his foragers for
charms—

A little glassy-headed hairless man,
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass;
Read but one book, and ever reading
grew

So grated down and filed away with
thought,

So lean his eyes were monstrous; while
the skin

Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and
spine.

And since he kept his mind on one sole
aim,

Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted
flesh,

Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall
That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting
men

Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,
And heard their voices talk behind the
wall,

And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
And forces; often o'er the sun's bright eye
Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud,
And lash'd it at the base with slanting
storm;

Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,
When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood
roar'd,

And the cairn'd mountain was a shadow,
sunn'd

The world to peace again: here was the
man.

And so by force they dragg'd him to the
King.

And then he taught the King to charm
the Queen

In such-wise, that no man could see her
more,

Nor saw she save the King, who wrought
the charm,

Coming and going, and she lay as dead,
And lost all use of life: but when the King
Made proffer of the league of golden mines,
The province with a hundred miles of coast,
The palace and the princess, that old man
Went back to his old wild, and lived on
grass,

And vanish'd, and his book came down
to me.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily:
'Ye have the book: the charm is written
in it:

Good: take my counsel: let me know it
at once:

For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,
With each chest lock'd and padlock'd
thirty-fold,

And whelm all this beneath as vast a
mound

As after furious battle turfs the slain
On some wild downabove the windy deep,
I yet should strike upon a sudden means
To dig, pick, open, find and read the
charm:

Then, if I tried it, who should blame me
then?'

And smiling as a master smiles at one
That is not of his school, nor any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long, he answer'd her:

'Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien!
O ay, it is but twenty pages long,
But every page having an ample marge,
And every marge enclosing in the midst
A square of text that looks a little blot,
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas;
And every square of text an awful charm,
Writ in a language that has long gone by.
So long, that mountains have arisen since

With cities on their flanks—thou read the book !

And every margin scribbled, crost, and cramm'd

With comment, densest condensation, hard
To mind and eye ; but the long sleepless nights

Of my long life have made it easy to me.
And none can read the text, not even I ;
And none can read the comment but myself ;

And in the comment did I find the charm.
O, the results are simple ; a mere child
Might use it to the harm of anyone,
And never could undo it : ask no more :
For tho' you should not prove it upon me,
But keep that oath ye sware, ye might,
perchance,

Assay it on some one of the Table Round,
And all because ye dream they babble of
you.'

And Vivien, frowning in true anger,
said :

'What dare the full-fed liars say of me ?
They ride abroad redressing human
wrongs !

They sit with knife in meat and wine in
horn !

They bound to holy vows of chastity !
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.
But you are man, you well can understand
The shame that cannot be explain'd for
shame.

Not one of all the drove should touch me :
swine !'

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her
words :

'You breathe but accusation vast and
vague,
Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If
ye know,
Set up the charge ye know, to stand or
fall !'

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrath-
fully :

'O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him
Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his
wife

And two fair babes, and went to distant
lands ;

Was one year gone, and on returning found
Not two but three ? there lay the reckling,
one

But one hour old ! What said the happy
sire ?

A seven-months' babe had been a truer gift.
Those twelve sweet moons confused his
fatherhood.'

Then answer'd Merlin, 'Nay, I know
the tale.

Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame :
Some cause had kept him sunder'd from
his wife :

One child they had : it lived with her :
she died :

His kinsman travelling on his own affair
Was charged by Valence to bring home
the child.

He brought, not found it therefore : take
the truth.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'overtrue a tale.
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagamore,
That ardent man ? "to pluck the flower
in season,"

So says the song, "I trow it is no treason."
O Master, shall we call him overquick
To crop his own sweet rose before the
hour ?'

And Merlin answer'd, 'Overquick art
thou

To catch a loathly plume fall'n from the
wing
Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole
prey

Is man's good name : he never wrong'd
his bride.

I know the tale. An angry gust of wind
Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-
room'd

And many-corridor'd complexities
Of Arthur's palace : then he found a door,
And darkling felt the sculptured ornament
That weathen round it made it seem his
own ;

And wearied out made for the couch and
slept,

A stainless man beside a stainless maid ;
And either slept, nor knew of other there ;
Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose
In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely
down,

Blushing upon them blushing, and at once
He rose without a word and parted from
her :

But when the thing was blazed about the
court,

The brute world howling forced them into
bonds,

And as it chanced they are happy, being
pure.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'that were likely
too.

What say ye then to fair Sir Percivale
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of
Christ,

Or some black wether of St. Satan's fold.
What, in the precincts of the chapel-yard,
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,
And by the cold *Hic Jacets* of the dead !'

And Merlin answer'd careless of her
charge,

'A sober man is Percivale and pure ;
But once in life was fluster'd with new
wine,

Then paced for coolness in the chapel-
yard ;

Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
And meant to stamp him with her master's
mark ;

And that he sinn'd is not believable ;
For, look upon his face !—but if he sinn'd,
The sin that practice burns into the blood,
And not the one dark hour which brings
remorse,

Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be :
Or else were he, the holy king, whose
hymns

Are chanted in the minster, worse than all.
But is your spleen froth'd out, or have ye
more ?'

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in
wrath :

'O ay ; what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend

Traitor or true ? that commerce with the
Queen,

I ask you, is it clamour'd by the child,
Or whisper'd in the corner ? do ye know
it ?'

To which he answer'd sadly, 'Yea, I
know it.

Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,
To fetch her, and she watch'd him from
her walls.

A rumour runs, she took him for the King,
So fixt her fancy on him : let them be.
But have ye no one word of loyal praise
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless
man ?'

She answer'd with a low and chuckling
laugh :

'Man ! is he man at all, who knows and
winks ?

Sees what his fair bride is and does, and
winks ?

By which the good King means to blind
himself,

And blinds himself and all the Table Round
To all the foulness that they work. Myself
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)
The pretty, popular name such manhood
earns,

Could call him the main cause of all their
crime ;

Yea, were he not crown'd King, coward,
and fool.'

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing,
said :

'O true and tender ! O my liege and
King !

O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who wouldst against thine own eye-
witness fain

Have all men true and leal, all women
pure ;

How, in the mouths of base interpreters,
From over-fineness not intelligible

To things with every sense as false and foul
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle
street,

Is thy white blamelessness accounted
blame !'

But Vivien, deeming Merlin overborne
By instance, recommenced, and let her
tongue
Rage like a fire among the noblest names,
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,
Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad
clean.

Her words had issue other than she
will'd.
He dragg'd his eyebrow bushes down,
and made
A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,
And mutter'd in himself, 'Tell *her* the
charm !
So, if she had it, would she rail on me
To snare the next, and if she have it not
So will she rail. What did the wanton say?
"Not mount as high"; we scarce can sink
as low :
For men at most differ as Heaven and
earth,
But women, worst and best, as Heaven
and Hell.
I know the Table Round, my friends of
old ;
All brave, and many generous, and some
chaste.
She cloaks the scar of some repulse with
lies ;
I well believe she tempted them and fail'd,
Being so bitter : for fine plots may fail,
Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as face
With colours of the heart that are not theirs.
I will not let her know : nine tithes of
times
Face-flatterer and backbiter are the same.
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a
crime
Are prone to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range ; or low desire
Not to feel lowest makes them level all ;
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the
plain,
To leave an equal baseness ; and in this
Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieving that their greatest are so
small,

Inflate themselves with some insane
delight,
And judge all nature from her feet of clay,
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see
Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual
fire,
And touching other worlds. I am weary
of her.'

He spoke in words part heard, in
whispers part,
Half-suffocated in the hoary fell
And many-winter'd fleece of throat and
chin.
But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his
mood,
And hearing 'harlot' mutter'd twice or
thrice,
Leapt from her session on his lap, and
stood
Stiff as a viper frozen ; loathsome sight,
How from the rosy lips of life and love,
Flash'd the bare-grinning skeleton of
death !
White was her cheek ; sharp breaths of
anger puff'd
Her fairy nostril out ; her hand half-
clench'd
Went faltering sideways downward to her
belt,
And feeling ; had she found a dagger
there
(For in a wink the false love turns to
hate)
She would have stabb'd him ; but she
found it not :
His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
To bitter weeping like a beaten child,
A long, long weeping, not consolable.
Then her false voice made way, broken
with sobs :

'O crueller than was ever told in tale,
Or sung in song ! O vainly lavish'd love !
O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,
Or seeming shameful—for what shame in
love,
So love be true, and not as yours is—
nothing
Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust

Who call'd her what he call'd her—all
her crime,
All—all—the wish to prove him wholly
hers.'

She mused a little, and then clapt her
hands

Together with a wailing shriek, and said :
'Stabb'd through the heart's affections to
the heart !

Seethed like the kid in its own mother's
milk !

Kill'd with a word worse than a life of
blows !

I thought that he was gentle, being great :
O God, that I had loved a smaller man !
I should have found in him a greater
heart.

O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw
The knights, the court, the King, dark
in your light,

Who loved to make men darker than they
are,

Because of that high pleasure which I
had

To seat you sole upon my pedestal
Of worship—I am answer'd, and hence-
forth

The course of life that seem'd so flowery
to me

With you for guide and master, only you,
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken
short,

And ending in a ruin—nothing left,
But into some low cave to crawl, and
there,

If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,
Kill'd with inutterable unkindliness.'

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung
her head,

The snake of gold slid from her hair, the
braid

Slipt and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh,
And the dark wood grew darker toward
the storm

In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believed her
true :

Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,
'Come from the storm,' and having no
reply,

Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the
face

Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or
shame ;

Then thrice essay'd, by tenderest-touching
terms,

To sleek her ruffled peace of mind, in
vain.

At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,
And as the cageling newly flown returns,
The seeming-injured simple-hearted thing
Came to her old perch back, and settled
there.

There while she sat, half-falling from his
knees,

Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw
The slow tear creep from her closed eye-
lid yet,

About her, more in kindness than in love,
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm.

But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,
Her arms upon her breast across, and
stood,

A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,
Upright and flush'd before him : then she
said :

'There must be now no passages of love
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore ;
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,
What should be granted which your own
gross heart

Would reckon worth the taking? I will
go.

In truth, but one thing now—better have
died

Thrice than have ask'd it once—could
make me stay—

That proof of trust—so often ask'd in
vain !

How justly, after that vile term of yours,
I find with grief! I might believe you
then,

Who knows? once more. Lo! what was
once to me

Mere matter of the fancy, now hath grown
The vast necessity of heart and life.

Farewell ; think gently of me, for I fear
 My fate or folly, passing gayer youth
 For one so old, must be to love thee still.
 But ere I leave thee let me swear once
 more
 That if I schemed against thy peace in
 this,
 May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er
 me, send
 One flash, that, missing all things else,
 may make
 My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie.'

Scarce had she ceased, when out of
 heaven a bolt
 (For now the storm was close above them)
 struck,

Furrowing a giant oak, and javelining
 With darted spikes and splinters of the
 wood

The dark earth round. He raised his
 eyes and saw

The tree that shone white-listed thro' the
 gloom.

But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her
 oath,

And dazzled by the livid-flickering fork,
 And deafen'd with the stammering cracks
 and claps

That follow'd, flying back and crying out,
 'O Merlin, tho' you do not love me, save,
 Yet save me !' clung to him and hugg'd
 him close ;

And call'd him dear protector in her
 fright,

Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,
 But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd
 him close.

The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
 Took gayer colours, like an opal warm'd.
 She blamed herself for telling hearsay
 tales :

She shook from fear, and for her fault
 she wept

Of petulancy ; she call'd him lord and
 liege,

Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,
 Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate
 love

Of her whole life ; and ever overhead

Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten
 branch

Snapt in the rushing of the river-rain
 Above them ; and in change of glare and
 gloom

Her eyes and neck glittering went and
 came ;

Till now the storm, its burst of passion
 spent,

Moaning and calling out of other lands,
 Had left the ravaged woodland yet once
 more

To peace ; and what should not have been
 had been,

For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,
 Had yielded, told her all the charm, and
 slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth
 the charm

Of woven paces and of waving hands,
 And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
 And lost to life and use and name and
 fame.

Then crying 'I have made his glory
 mine,'

And shrieking out 'O fool !' the harlot
 leapt

Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
 Behind her, and the forest echo'd 'fool.'

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the loveable,
 Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
 High in her chamber up a tower to the
 east

Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot ;
 Which first she placed where morning's
 earliest ray

Might strike it, and awake her with the
 gleam ;

Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
 A case of silk, and braided thereupon

All the devices blazon'd on the shield
 In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
 A border fantasy of branch and flower

And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
 Nor rested thus content, but day by day,

Leaving her household and good father,
climb'd

That eastern tower, and entering barr'd
her door,

Stript off the case, and read the naked
shield,

Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his
arms,

Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,

And every scratch a lance had made
upon it,

Conjecturing when and where : this cut
is fresh ;

That ten years back ; this dealt him at
Caerlyle ;

That at Caerleon ; this at Camelot :

And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was
there !

And here a thrust that might have kill'd,
but God

Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his
enemy down,

And saved him : so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good
shield

Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his
name ?

He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great diamond in the diamond

jousts,

Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that
name

Had named them, since a diamond was
the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd
him King,

Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black

tarn.

A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain
side :

For here two brothers, one a king, had
met

And fought together ; but their names
were lost ;

And each had slain his brother at a blow ;

And down they fell and made the glen
abhorr'd :

And there they lay till all their bones
were bleach'd,

And lichen'd into colour with the crags :
And he, that once was king, had on a

crown

Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.

And Arthur came, and labouring up the
pass,

All in a misty moonshine, unawares

Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and
the skull

Brake from the nape, and from the skull
the crown

Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims

Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn :

And down the shingly scaur he plunged,
and caught,

And set it on his head, and in his heart

Heard murmurs, ' Lo, thou likewise shalt
be King.'

Thereafter, when a King, he had the
gems

Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them
to his knights,

Saying, ' These jewels, whereupon I
chanced

Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the
King's—

For public use : henceforward let there be,

Once every year, a joust for one of these :

For so by nine years' proof we needs
must learn

Which is our mightiest, and ourselves
shall grow

In use of arms and manhood, till we drive

The heathen, who, some say, shall rule
the land

Hereafter, which God hinder.' Thus he
spoke :

And eight years past, eight jousts had
been, and still

Had Lancelot won the diamond of the
year,

With purpose to present them to the
Queen,

When all were won ; but meaning all at
once

To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken
word.

Now for the central diamond and the
last
And largest, Arthur, holding then his
court

Hard on the river nigh the place which
now

Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake (for she had been sick) to Guine-
vere,

'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot
move

To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she
said, 'ye know it.'

'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the
great deeds

Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
A sight ye love to look on.' And the
Queen

Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the
King.

He thinking that he read her meaning
there,

'Stay with me, I am sick; my love is
more

Than many diamonds,' yielded; and a
heart

Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
(However much he yearn'd to make
complete

The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
Urged him to speak against the truth,
and say,

'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly
whole,

And lets me from the saddle'; and the
King

Glanced first at him, then her, and went
his way.

No sooner gone than suddenly she began:

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot,
much to blame!

Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the
knights

Are half of them our enemies, and the
crowd

Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones,
who take

Their pastime now the trustful King is
gone!"

Then Lancelot vext at having lied in vain:
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
My Queen, that summer, when ye loved
me first.

Then of the crowd yetook no more account
Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
When its own voice clings to each blade
of grass,

And every voice is nothing. As to
knights,

Them surely can I silence with all ease.
But now my loyal worship is allow'd

Of all men: many a bard, without offence,
Has link'd our names together in his lay,
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guine-
vere,

The pearl of beauty: and our knights at
feast

Have pledged us in this union, while the
King

Would listen smiling. How then? is
there more?

Has Arthur spoken aught? or would
yourself,

Now weary of my service and devoir,
Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?

She broke into a little scornful laugh:
'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless
King,

That passionate perfection, my good
lord—

But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
He never spake word of reproach to me,
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
He cares not for me: only here to-day
There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his
eyes:

Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with
him—else

Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,
To make them like himself: but, friend,
to me

He is all fault who hath no fault at all :
For who loves me must have a touch of
earth ;

The low sun makes the colour : I am yours,
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the
bond.

And therefore hear my words : go to the
jousts :

The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our
dream

When sweetest ; and the vermin voices here
May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but
they sting.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of
knights :

'And with what face, after my pretext
made,

Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
Before a King who honours his own
word,

As if it were his God's?'

'Yea,' said the Queen,

'A moral child without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me : but listen to me,
If I must find you wit : we hear it said

That men go down before your spear at
a touch,

But knowing you are Lancelot ; your great
name,

This conquers : hide it therefore ; go
unknown :

Win ! by this kiss you will : and our true
King

Will then allow your pretext, O my
knight,

As all for glory ; for to speak him true,
Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he
seem,

No keener hunter after glory breathes.
He loves it in his knights more than
himself :

They prove to him his work : win and
return.'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
Wroth at himself. Not willing to be
known,

He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,

Chose the green path that show'd the
rarer foot,

And there among the solitary downs,
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way ;
Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,
That all in loops and links among the
dales

Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
Fired from the west, far on a hill, the
towers.

Thither he made, and blew the gateway
horn.

Then came an old, dumb, myriad-
wrinkled man,

Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.
And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless
man ;

And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir
Lavaine,

Moving to meet him in the castle court ;
And close behind them stept the lily maid
Elaine, his daughter : mother of the house
There was not : some light jest among
them rose

With laughter dying down as the great
knight

Approach'd them : then the Lord of
Astolat :

'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by
what name

Livest between the lips ? for by thy state
And presence I might guess thee chief of
those,

After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.
Him have I seen : the rest, his Table
Round,

Known as they are, to me they are un-
known.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of
knights :

'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and
known,

What I by mere mischance have brought,
my shield.

But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,
Hereafter ye shall know me—and the
shield—

I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not
mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here
is Torre's:

Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.
And so, God wot, his shield is blank
enough.

His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir
Torre,

'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have
it.'

Here laugh'd the father saying, 'Fie, Sir
Churl,

Is that an answer for a noble knight?

Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger
here,

He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an
hour,

And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay good father, shame
me not

Before this noble knight,' said young
Lavaine,

'For nothing. Surely I but play'd on
Torre:

He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go:
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden
dreamt

That some one put this diamond in her
hand,

And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle-well, belike; and then I said
That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
Then must she keep it safelier. All was
jest.

But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:
Win shall I not, but do my best to win:
Young as I am, yet would I do my best.'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd
Lancelot,

Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship

O'er these waste downs whereon I lost
myself,

Then were I glad of you as guide and
friend:

And you shall win this diamond,—as I
hear

It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.'

'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir
Torre,

'Such be for queens, and not for simple
maids.'

Then she, who held her eyes upon the
ground,

Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement
Before the stranger knight, who, looking
at her,

Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd:
'If what is fair be but for what is fair,
And only queens are to be counted so,
Rash were my judgment then, who deem
this maid

Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like.'

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid
Elaine,

Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,
Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.
The great and guilty love he bare the
Queen,

In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere
his time.

Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the
world,

Had been the sleeker for it: but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul.

Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest
man

That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marr'd, of more than twice her
years,

Seam'd with an ancient swordcut on the
cheek,

And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up
her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was
her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of
the court,
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all grace, and not with half
disdain

Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind :
Whom they with meats and vintage of
their best

And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
And much they ask'd of court and Table
Round,

And ever well and readily answer'd he :
But Lancelot, when they glanced at
Guinevere,

Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the Baron that, ten years
before,

The heathen caught and reft him of his
tongue.

'He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce
design

Against my house, and him they caught
and maim'd ;

But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among
the woods

By the great river in a boatman's hut.
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur
broke

The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'

'Othere, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine
said, rapt

By all the sweet and sudden passion of
youth

Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have
fought.

O tell us—for we live apart—you know
Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot
spoke

And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent
Glem ;

And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of Duglas ; that on Bassa ; then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy
skirts

Of Celidon the forest ; and again
By castle Gurnion, where the glorious
King

Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carved of one emerald center'd in a sun
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he
breathed ;

And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild
white Horse

Set every gilded parapet shuddering ;
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath
Troit,

Where many a heathen fell ; 'and on the
mount

Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And break them ; and I saw him, after,
stand

High on a heap of slain, from spur to
plume

Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
"They are broken, they are broken !"
for the King,

However mild he seems at home, nor cares
For triumph in our mimic wars, the
jousts—

For if his own knight cast him down, he
laughs

Saying, his knights are better men than
he—

Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him : I never saw his like : there lives
No greater leader.'

While he utter'd this,
Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
'Save your great self, fair lord' ; and
when he fell

From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—
She still took note that when the living
smile

Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him
cheer,

There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature: and she
thought

That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest; so the face before her lived,
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence,
full

Of noble things, and held her from her
sleep.

Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the
thought

She needs must bid farewell to sweet
Lavaine.

First as in fear, step after step, she stole
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the
court,

'This shield, my friend, where is it?'
and Lavaine

Past inward, as she came from out the
tower.

There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd,
and smooth'd

The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
Half-enslaved of the flattering hand, she
drew

Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more
amazed

Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light.
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's.

Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,
That he should wear her favour at the tilt.
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
'Fair lord, whose name I know not—
noble it is,

I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
My favour at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said
he,

'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
Favour of any lady in the lists.

Such is my wont, as those, who know me,
know.'

'Yea, so,' she answer'd; 'then in wearing
mine

Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble
lord,

'That those who know should know you.'
And he turn'd

Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answer'd, 'True,
my child.

Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
What is it?' and she told him 'A red
sleeve

Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it:
then he bound

Her token on his helmet, with a smile
Saying, 'I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living,' and the blood
Sprang to her face and fill'd her with
delight;

But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd
shield,

His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
'Do me this grace, my child, to have my
shield

In keeping till I come.' 'A grace to me,'
She answer'd, 'twice to-day. I am your
squire!'

Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, 'Lily
maid,

For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your colour back;
Once, twice, and thrice: now get you
hence to bed':

So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own
hand,

And thus they moved away: she stay'd
a minute,

Then made a sudden step to the gate,
and there—

Her bright hair blown about the serious
face

Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
 Paused by the gateway, standing near
 the shield
 In silence, while she watch'd their arms
 far-off
 Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
 Then to her tower she climb'd, and took
 the shield,
 There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past
 away
 Far o'er the long backs of the bushless
 downs,
 To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived
 a knight
 Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
 A hermit, who had pray'd, labour'd and
 pray'd,
 And ever labouring had scoop'd himself
 In the white rock a chapel and a hall
 On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,
 And cells and chambers: all were fair
 and dry;
 The green light from the meadows under-
 neath
 Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
 And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
 And poplars made a noise of falling
 showers.
 And thither wending there that night they
 bode.

But when the next day broke from
 underground,
 And shot red fire and shadows thro' the
 cave,
 They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and
 rode away:
 Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold
 my name
 Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the
 Lake,'
 Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant rever-
 ence,
 Dearer to true young hearts than their
 own praise,
 But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it
 indeed?'
 And after muttering 'The great Lancelot,'

At last he got his breath and answer'd,
 'One,
 One have I seen—that other, our liege
 lord,
 The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of
 kings,
 Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
 He will be there—then were I stricken
 blind
 That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they
 reach'd the lists
 By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
 Run thro' the peopled gallery which half
 round
 Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
 Until they found the clear-faced King,
 who sat
 Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
 Since to his crown the golden dragon
 clung,
 And down his robe the dragon writhed
 in gold,
 And from the carven-work behind him
 crept
 Two dragons gilded, sloping down to
 make
 Arms for his chair, while all the rest of
 them
 Thro' knots and loops and folds innu-
 merable
 Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they
 found
 The new design wherein they lost them-
 selves,
 Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:
 And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
 Blazed the last diamond of the nameless
 king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine
 and said,
 'Me you call great: mine is the firmer
 seat,
 The truer lance: but there is many a youth
 Now crescent, who will come to all I am
 And overcome it; and in me there dwells
 No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
 Of greatness to know well I am not great:

There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped
upon him

As on a thing miraculous, and anon
The trumpets blew; and then did either
side,

They that assail'd, and they that held the
lists,

Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly
move,

Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock, that a man far-off might well
perceive,

If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder
of arms.

And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd
into it

Against the stronger: little need to speak
Of Lancelot, in his glory! King, duke,
earl,

Count, baron—whom he smote, he over-
threw.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith
and kin,

Ranged with the Table Round that held
the lists,

Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger
knight

Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other,
'Lo!

What is he? I do not mean the force
alone—

The grace and versatility of the man!
Is it not Lancelot?' 'When has Lance-
lot worn

Favour of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we, that know him,
know.'

'How then? who then?' a fury seized
them all,

A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their
steeds, and thus,

Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind
they made

In moving, all together down upon him

Bare, as a wild wave in the wild North-sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit,
bears, with all

Its stormy crests that smoke against the
skies,

Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a
spear

Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the
head

Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt,
and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and wor-
shipfully;

He bore a knight of old repute to the
earth,

And brought his horse to Lancelot where
he lay.

He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet
endure,

And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party,—tho' it seem'd half-miracle
To those he fought with,—drave his kith
and kin,

And all the Table Round that held the
lists,

Back to the barrier; then the trumpets
blew

Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the
sleeve

Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the
knights,

His party, cried 'Advance and take thy
prize

The diamond'; but he answer'd, 'Diamond
me

No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow
me not.'

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from
the field

With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
There from his charger down he slid, and
sat,

Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance-head':

'Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine,

'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'

But he, 'I die already with it: draw—Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave

A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,

And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank

For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.

Then came the hermit out and bare him in,

There stanch'd his wound; and there, in daily doubt

Whether to live or die, for many a week Hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove

Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,

And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,

His party, knights of utmost North and West,

Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,

Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,

'Lo, Sire, our knight, thro' whom we won the day,

Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize

Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'

'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that such an one,

So great a knight as we have seen to-day—

He seem'd to me another Lancelot—

Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—

He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore, rise,

O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight.

Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.

I charge you that you get at once to horse. And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you

Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:

His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him

No customary honour: since the knight Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,

Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take This diamond, and deliver it, and return,

And bring us where he is, and how he fares,

And cease not from your quest until ye find.'

So saying, from the carven flower above, To which it made a restless heart, he took, And gave, the diamond: then from where he sat

At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose, With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince

In the mid might and flourish of his May, Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,

And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint

And Gareth, a good knight, but there-withal

Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot, Nor often loyal to his word, and now

Wroth that the King's command to sally forth

In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave

The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;

While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,

Past, thinking 'Is it Lancelot who hath come

Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain

Of glory, and hath added wound to wound, And ridd'n away to die?' So fear'd the

King,

And, after two days' tarriance there,
return'd.

Then when he saw the Queen, embrac-
ing ask'd,

'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay,
lord,' she said.

'And where is Lancelot?' Then the
Queen amazed,

'Was he not with you? won he not your
prize?'

'Nay, but one like him.' 'Why that like
was he.'

And when the King demanded how she
knew,

Said, 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted
from us,

Than Lancelot told me of a common
talk

That men went down before his spear at
a touch,

But knowing he was Lancelot; his great
name

Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide
his name

From all men, ev'n the King, and to this
end

Had made the pretext of a hindering
wound,

That he might joust unknown of all, and
learn

If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
And added, "Our true Arthur, when he

learns,
Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
Of purer glory."

Then replied the King:

'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
To have trusted me as he hath trusted
thee.

Surely his King and most familiar friend
Might well have kept his secret. True,
indeed,

Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter:
now remains

But little cause for laughter: his own
kin—

Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him,
this!—

His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon
him;

So that he went sore wounded from the
field:

Yet good news too: for goodly hopes are
mine

That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm

A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great
pearls,

Some gentle maiden's gift.'

'Yea, lord,' she said,

'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that,
she choked,

And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,
Past to her chamber, and there flung
herself

Down on the great King's couch, and
writhed upon it,

And clench'd her fingers till they bit the
palm,

And shriek'd out 'Traitor' to the un-
hearing wall,

Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose
again,

And moved about her palace, proud and
pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region
round

Rode with his diamond, wearied of the
quest,

Touch'd at all points, except the poplar
grove,

And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat:
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the
maid

Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from
Camelot, lord?

What of the knight with the red sleeve?'
'He won.'

'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from
the jousts

Hurt in the side,' whereat she caught her
breath;

Thro' her own side she felt the sharp
lance go;

Thereon she smote her hand : wellnigh
 she swoon'd :
 And, while he gazed wonderingly at her,
 came
 The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the
 Prince
 Reported who he was, and on what quest
 Sent, that he bore the prize and could not
 find
 The victor, but had ridd'n a random
 round
 To seek him, and had wearied of the
 search.
 To whom the Lord of Astolat, ' Bide with
 us,
 And ride no more at random, noble
 Prince !
 Here was the knight, and here he left a
 shield ;
 This will he send or come for : further-
 more
 Our son is with him ; we shall hear anon,
 Needs must we hear.' To this the cour-
 teous Prince
 Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
 Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
 And stay'd ; and cast his eyes on fair
 Elaine :
 Where could be found face daintier ? then
 her shape
 From forehead down to foot, perfect—
 again
 From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd :
 ' Well—if I bide, lo ! this wild flower for
 me !'
 And oft they met among the garden yews,
 And there he set himself to play upon her
 With sallying wit, tree flashes from a
 height
 Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
 Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden elo-
 quence
 And amorous adulation, till the maid
 Rebell'd against it, saying to him, ' Prince,
 O loyal nephew of our noble King,
 Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
 Whence you might learn his name ? Why
 slight your King,
 And lose the quest he sent you on, and
 prove

No surer than our falcon yesterday,
 Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and
 went
 To all the winds ?' ' Nay, by mine
 head,' said he,
 ' I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
 O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes ;
 But an ye will it let me see the shield.'
 And when the shield was brought, and
 Gawain saw
 Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with
 gold,
 Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh,
 and mock'd :
 ' Right was the King ! our Lancelot !
 that true man !'
 ' And right was I,' she answer'd merrily,
 ' I,
 Who dream'd my knight the greatest
 knight of all.'
 ' And if I dream'd,' said Gawain, ' that
 you love
 This greatest knight, your pardon ! lo,
 ye know it !
 Speak therefore : shall I waste myself in
 vain ?'
 Full simple was her answer, ' What know
 I ?
 My brethren have been all my fellow-
 ship ;
 And I, when often they have talk'd of
 love,
 Wish'd it had been my mother, for they
 talk'd,
 Meseem'd, of what they knew not ; so
 myself—
 I know not if I know what true love is,
 But if I know, then, if I love not him,
 I know there is none other I can love.'
 ' Yea, by God's death,' said he, ' ye love
 him well,
 But would not, knew ye what all others
 know,
 And whom he loves.' ' So be it,' cried
 Elaine,
 And lifted her fair face and moved away :
 But he pursued her, calling, ' Stay a
 little !
 One golden minute's grace ! he wore
 your sleeve :

Would he break faith with one I may not
name?

Must our true man change like a leaf at
last?

Nay—like enow: why then, far be it
from me

To cross our mighty Lancelot in his
loves!

And, damsel, for I deem you know full
well

Where your great knight is hidden, let
me leave

My quest with you; the diamond also:
here!

For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand; and whether he
love or not,

A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
A thousand times!—a thousand times
farewell!

Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we
two

May meet at court hereafter: there, I
think,

So ye will learn the courtesies of the
court,

We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,

And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he
gave,

The diamond, and all wearied of the
quest

Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he
went

A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past; there told
the King

What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is
the knight.'

And added, 'Sire, my liege, so much I
learnt;

But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all
round

The region: but I lighted on the maid
Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him;

and to her,

Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,

I gave the diamond: she will render it;
For by mine head she knows his hiding-
place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd,
and replied,

'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all
in awe,

For twenty strokes of the blood, without
a word,

Linger'd that other, staring after him;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and
buzz'd abroad

About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues
were loosed:

'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lance-
lot,

Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'
Some read the King's face, some the
Queen's, and all

Had marvel what the maid might be, but
most

Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old
dame

Came suddenly on the Queen with the
sharp news.

She, that had heard the noise of it
before,

But sorrowing Lancelot should have
stoop'd so low,

Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tran-
quillity.

So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder
flared:

Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or
thrice

Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the
Queen,

And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen,
who sat

With lips severely placid, felt the knot
Climb in her throat, and with her feet
unseen

Crush'd the wild passion out against the
 floor
 Beneath the banquet, where the meats
 became
 As wormwood, and she hated all who
 plighted.

But far away the maid in Astolat,
 Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
 The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her
 heart,

Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
 Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face
 and said,

'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
 Is yours who let me have my will, and
 now,

Sweet father, will you let me lose my
 wits?'

'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore,
 let me hence,'

She answer'd, 'and find out our dear
 Lavaine.'

'Ye will not lose your wits for dear
 Lavaine :

Bide,' answer'd he: 'we needs must hear
 anon

Of him, and of that other.' 'Ay,' she
 said,

'And of that other, for I needs must hence
 And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,
 And with mine own hand give his diamond
 to him,

Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
 As yon proud Prince who left the quest
 to me.

Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
 Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
 Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's
 aid.

The gentler-born the maiden, the more
 bound,

My father, to be sweet and serviceable
 To noble knights in sickness, as ye know
 When these have worn their tokens: let
 me hence

I pray you.' Then her father nodding
 said,

'Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my
 child,

Right fain were I to learn this knight
 were whole,

Being our greatest: yea, and you must
 give it—

And sure I think this fruit is hung too
 high

For any mouth to gape for save a
 queen's—

Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you
 gone,

Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slept away,
 And while she made her ready for her
 ride,

Her father's latest word humm'd in her
 ear,

'Being so very wilful you must go,'
 And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
 'Being so very wilful you must die.'

But she was happy enough and shook it
 off,

As she shake off the bee that buzzes at us;
 And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
 'What matter, so I help him back to life?'

Then far away with good Sir Torre for
 guide

Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless
 downs

To Camelot, and before the city-gates
 Came on her brother with a happy face
 Making a roan horse caper and curvet

For pleasure all about a field of flowers:
 Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she
 cried, 'Lavaine,

How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He
 amazed,

'Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir
 Lancelot!

How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?'

But when the maid had told him all her
 tale,

Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his
 moods

Left them, and under the strange-statued
 gate,

Where Arthur's wars were render'd
 mystically,

Past up the still rich city to his kin,

His own far blood, which dwelt at
Camelot ;
And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
Led to the caves : there first she saw the
casque
Of Lancelot on the wall : her scarlet
sleeve,
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls
away,
Stream'd from it still ; and in her heart
she laugh'd,
Because he had not loosed it from his
helm,
But meant once more perchance to tour-
ney in it.
And when they gain'd the cell wherein
he slept,
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
Of dragging down his enemy made them
move.
Then she that saw him lying unsleek,
unshorn,
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.
The sound not wonted in a place so still
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd
his eyes
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him,
saying,
'Your prize the diamond sent you by the
King' :
His eyes glisten'd : she fancied 'Is it for
me ?'
And when the maid had told him all the
tale
Of King and Prince, the diamond sent,
the quest
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
And laid the diamond in his open hand.
Her face was near, and as we kiss the
child
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her
face.
At once she slipt like water to the floor.
'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied
you.
Rest must you have.' 'No rest for me,'
she said ;

'Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.'
What might she mean by that ? his large
black eyes,
Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon
her,
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
In the heart's colours on her simple face ;
And Lancelot look'd and was perplex in
mind,
And being weak in body said no more ;
But did not love the colour ; woman's
love,
Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the
fields,
And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured
gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin ;
There bode the night : but woke with
dawn, and past
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave : so day by day she
past
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
Gliding, and every day she tended him,
And likewise many a night : and Lancelot
Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little
hurt
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at
times
Brain-feverous in his heat and agony,
seem
Uncourteous, even he : but the meek
maid
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first
fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her ; till the hermit, skill'd in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had saved his
life.
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet
Elaine,
Would listen for her coming and regret

Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the
love

Of man and woman when they love their
best,

Closest and sweetest, and had died the
death

In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other
world

Another world for the sick man ; but now
The shackles of an old love straiten'd
him,

His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sick-
ness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not
live :

For when the blood ran lustier in him
again,

Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.

Then if the maiden, while that ghostly
grace

Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd
not,

Or short and coldly, and she knew right
well

What the rough sickness meant, but what
this meant

She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd
her sight,

And drave her ere her time across the
fields

Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain : it cannot
be.

He will not love me : how then ? must
I die ?'

Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few
notes,

Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid

Went half the night repeating, 'Must I
die ?'

And now to right she turn'd, and now to
left,

And found no ease in turning or in rest ;
And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd,

'death or him,'

Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt
was whole,

To Astolat returning rode the three.

There morn by morn, arraying her sweet
self

In that wherein she deem'd she look'd
her best,

She came before Sir Lancelot, for she
thought

'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'

And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
That she should ask some goodly gift of
him

For her own self or hers ; 'and do not
shun

To speak the wish most near to your true
heart ;

Such service have ye done me, that I make
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord
am I

In mine own land, and what I will I can.'

Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to

speak.

And Lancelot saw that she withheld her
wish,

And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it ; and one morn it

chanced

He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your
wish,

Seeing I go to-day' : then out she brake :
'Going ? and we shall never see you more.

And I must die for want of one bold word.'

'Speak : that I live to hear,' he said, 'is
yours.'

Then suddenly and passionately she spoke :
'I have gone mad. I love you : let me

die.'

'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'

And innocently extending her white arms,
'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be your wife.'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,

I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine :
But now there never will be wife of mine.'

'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,

But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'

And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world,
the world,

All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue

To blare its own interpretation—nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,

And your good father's kindness.' And she said,

'Not to be with you, not to see your face—
Alas for me then, my good days are done.'

'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay !

This is not love : but love's first flash in youth,

Most common : yea, I know it of mine own self :

And you yourself will smile at your own self

Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life

To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age :

And then will I, for true you are and sweet

Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
More specially should your good knight be poor,

Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,

So that would make you happy : further—
more,

Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my blood,

In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke
She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale

Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied :

'Of all this will I nothing' ; and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew

Their talk had pierced, her father : 'Ay, a flash,

I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.

I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,
'That were against me : what I can I will' ;

And there that day remain'd, and toward even

Sent for his shield : full meekly rose the maid,

Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield ;

Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,

Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd

Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.

And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound ;

And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking

at him.

And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,

Nor bad farewell, but sadly rode away.
This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat :
His very shield was gone ; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labour,
left.

But still she heard him, still his picture
form'd

And grew between her and the pictured
wall.

Then came her father, saying in low tones,
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted
quietly.

Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace
to thee,

Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all
calm.

But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant
field

Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd ;
the owls

Wailing had power upon her, and she
mixt

Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little
song,

And call'd her song 'The Song of Love
and Death,'

And sang it : sweetly could she make
and sing.

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain,
in vain ;

And sweet is death who puts an end to
pain :

I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter
death must be :

Love, thou art bitter ; sweet is death to
me.

O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to
fade away,

Sweet death, that seems to make us love-
less clay,

I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could
be ;

I needs must follow death, who calls for
me ;

Call and I follow, I follow ! let me die.'

High with the last line scaled her voice,
and this,

All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard,
and thought

With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of
the house

That ever shrieks before a death,' and
call'd

The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo ! the blood-red light
of dawn

Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let
me die !'

As when we dwell upon a word we
know,

Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwell the father on her face, and
thought

'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and
lay,

Speaking a still good-morrow with her
eyes.

At last she said, 'Sweet brothers, yester-
night

I seem'd a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the
woods,

And when ye used to take me with the
flood

Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it : there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.

And yet I cried because ye would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.

And yet ye would not ; but this night I
dream'd

That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, "Now shall I have my
will" :

And there I woke, but still the wish
remain'd.

So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King.

There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at
me ;

But there the fine Gawain will wonder at
me,

And there the great Sir Lancelot muse
at me ;

Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to
me,

Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bad me
one :

And there the King will know me and
my love,

And there the Queen herself will pity me,
And all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest !'

'Peace,' said her father, 'O my child,
ye seem

Light-headed, for what force is yours to
go

So far, being sick ? and wherefore would
ye look

On this proud fellow again, who scorns
all ?'

Then the rough Torre began to heave
and move,

And bluster into stormy sobs and say,
'I never loved him : an I meet with
him,

I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him
down,

Give me good fortune, I will strike him
dead,

For this discomfort he hath done the
house.'

To whom the gentle sister made reply,
'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be
wroth,

Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me, than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the
highest.'

'Highest?' the father answer'd, echoing
'highest ?'

(He meant to break the passion in her)
'nay,

Daughter, I know not what you call the
highest ;

But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame :
And she returns his love in open shame ;
If this be high, what is it to be low ?'

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat :
'Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
For anger : these are slanders : never yet
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.

He makes no friend who never made a foe.
But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain : so let me
pass,

My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest, tho' my love had no return :
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
Thanks, but you work against your own
desire ;

For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner ; wherefore
cease,

Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and
die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and
gone,

She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
A letter, word for word ; and when he
ask'd

'Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord ?
Then will I bear it gladly' ; she replied,
'For Lancelot and the Queen and all the
world,

But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote
The letter she devised ; which being writ
And folded, 'O sweet father, tender and
true,

Deny me not,' she said—'ye never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
My latest : lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it ; I shall guard it even in death.
And when the heat is gone from out my
heart,

Then take the little bed on which I died

For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the
Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own
self,

And none of you can speak for me so well.
And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the
doors.'

She ceased: her father promised;
whereupon

She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her
death

Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the
eleventh

Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died:
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from
underground,

Then, those two brethren slowly with bent
brows

Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that
shone

Full-summer, to that stream whereon the
barge,

Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
Theresat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to
her

'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the
dead,

Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with
the flood—

In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming
down—

And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in
white

All but her face, and that clear-featured
face

Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace
craved

Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and
blow,

With deaths of others, and almost his
own,

The nine-years-fought-for diamonds: for
he saw

One of her house, and sent him to the
Queen

Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen
agreed

With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but
that he,

Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her
feet

For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the
walls,

And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the
stream,

They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd,
'Queen,

Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making
them

An armet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the
swan's

Is tawnier than her cygnet's : these are words :

Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it
Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin
in words

Perchance, we both can pardon : but, my
Queen,

I hear of rumours flying thro' your court.
Our bond, as not the bond of man and
wife,

Should have in it an absoluter trust
To make up that defect : let rumours be :
When did not rumours fly ? these, as I
trust

That you trust me in your own nobleness,
I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away,
the Queen

Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them
off,

Till all the place whereon she stood was
green ;

Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive
hand

Received at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied :

'It may be, I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the
Lake.

Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,
It can be broken easier. I for you
This many a year have done despite and
wrong

To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
I did acknowledge nobler. What are
these ?

Diamonds for me ! they had been thrice
their worth

Being your gift, had you not lost your
own.

To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me !
For her ! for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you : have your joys
apart.

I doubt not that however changed, you
keep

So much of what is graceful : and myself
Would shun to break those bounds of
courtesy

In which as Arthur's Queen I move and
rule :

So cannot speak my mind. An end to
this !

A strange one ! yet I take it with Amen.
So pray you, add my diamonds to her
pearls ;

Deck her with these ; tell her, she shines
me down :

An armlet for an arm to which the
Queen's

Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
O as much fairer—as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds—hers
not mine—

Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my
will—

She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,
And, thro' the casement standing wide
for heat,

Flung them, and down they flash'd, and
smote the stream.

Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as
it were,

Diamonds to meet them, and they past
away.

Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half
disdain

At love, life, all things, on the window
ledge,

Close underneath his eyes, and right
across

Where these had fallen, slowly past the
barge

Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst
away

To weep and wail in secret ; and the
barge,

On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.

There two stood arm'd, and kept the
 door ; to whom,
 All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
 Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes
 that ask'd

'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard
 face,

As hard and still as is the face that men
 Shape to their fancy's eye from broken
 rocks

On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and
 they said,

'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
 Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen,
 so fair !

Yea, but how pale ! what are they ? flesh
 and blood ?

Or come to take the King to Fairyland ?
 For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
 But that he passes into Fairyland.'

While thus they babbled of the King,
 the King

Came girt with knights : then turn'd the
 tongueless man

From the half-face to the full eye, and
 rose

And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.
 So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale

And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid ;
 And reverently they bore her into hall.

Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd
 at her,

And Lancelot later came and mused at
 her,

And last the Queen herself, and pitied
 her :

But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
 Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it ;
 this was all :

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the
 Lake,

I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
 Come, for you left me taking no farewell,

Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
 I loved you, and my love had no return,

And therefore my true love has been my
 death.

And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,

And to all other ladies, I make moan :
 Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
 Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
 As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read ;
 And ever in the reading, lords and dames
 Wept, looking often from his face who
 read

To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
 So touch'd were they, half-thinking that
 her lips,

Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them
 all :

'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that
 hear,

Know that for this most gentle maiden's
 death

Right heavy am I ; for good she was and
 true,

But loved me with a love beyond all love
 In women, whomsoever I have known.

Yet to be loved makes not to love again ;
 Not at my years, however it hold in youth.

I swear by truth and knighthood that I
 gave

No cause, not willingly, for such a love :
 To this I call my friends in testimony,

Her brethren, and her father, who himself
 Besought me to be plain and blunt, and

use,
 To break her passion, some discourtesy

Against my nature : what I could, I did.
 I left her and I bad her no farewell ;

Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would
 have died,

I might have put my wits to some rough
 use,

And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen
 (Sea was her wrath, yet working after
 storm)

'Ye might at least have done her so
 much grace,

Fair lord, as would have help'd her from
 her death.'

He raised his head, their eyes met and
 hers fell,

He adding,
 'Queen, she would not be content
 Save that I wedded her, which could not
 be.
 Then might she follow me thro' the world,
 she ask'd ;
 It could not be. I told her that her love
 Was but the flash of youth, would darken
 down
 To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
 Toward one more worthy of her—then
 would I,
 More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
 Estate them with large land and territory
 In mine own realm beyond the narrow
 seas,
 To keep them in all joyance : more than
 this
 I could not ; this she would not, and she
 died.'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, 'O my
 knight,
 It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
 And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
 To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in
 all the realm
 Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
 The marshall'd Order of their Table
 Round,
 And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
 The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
 Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
 And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
 And when the knights had laid her comely
 head
 Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
 Then Arthur spake among them, 'Let
 her tomb

Be costly, and her image thereupon,
 And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
 Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
 And let the story of her dolorous voyage
 For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
 In letters gold and azure !' which was
 wrought
 Thereafter ; but when now the lords and
 dames

And people, from the high door stream-
 ing, brake
 Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
 Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved
 apart,
 Drew near, and sigh'd in passing,
 'Lancelot,
 Forgive me ; mine was jealousy in love.'
 He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
 'That is love's curse ; pass on, my Queen,
 forgiven.'
 But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
 Approach'd him, and with full affection
 said,

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom
 I have
 Most joy and most affiance, for I know
 What thou hast been in battle by my side,
 And many a time have watch'd thee at
 the tilt
 Strike down the lusty and long practised
 knight,
 And let the younger and unskill'd go by
 To win his honour and to make his name,
 And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
 Made to be loved ; but now I would to
 God,
 Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
 Thou couldst have loved this maiden,
 shaped, it seems,
 By God for thee alone, and from her face,
 If one may judge the living by the dead,
 Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
 Who might have brought thee, now a
 lonely man
 Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
 Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
 My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the
 Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, 'Fair she was,
 my King,
 Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.
 To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
 To doubt her pureness were to want a
 heart—
 Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
 Could bind him, but free love will not be
 bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said
the King.
'Let love be free; free love is for the
best:
And, after heaven, on our dull side of
death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but
he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her
moving down,
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself, 'Ah simple heart and
sweet,
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for
thy soul?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at
last—
Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love"?
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous
pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and
fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to
me?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a
reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms—the
wondrous one
Who passes thro' the vision of the night—
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Heard on the winding waters, eve and
morn
She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair,
my child,
As a king's son," and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er
it be!

For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and
have it:
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;
Now grown a part of me; but what use in
it?
To make men worse by making my sin
known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must
break
These bonds that so defame me: not
without
She wills it: would I, if she will'd it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then
may God,
I pray him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten
mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the
hills.'

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful
pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

THE HOLY GRAIL

FROM noiseful arms, and acts of prowess
done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd
The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for
the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after,
died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the
rest,
And honour'd him, and wrought into his
heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came: and as they
sat

Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening
half

The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into
smoke

Above them, ere the summer when he
died,

The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale :

‘O brother, I have seen this yew-tree
smoke,

Spring after spring, for half a hundred
years :

For never have I known the world with-
out,

Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale : but
thee,

When first thou camest—such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice—
I knew

For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall ;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but everyone of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King ; and
now

Tell me, what drove thee from the Table
Round,

My brother ? was it earthly passion crost ?’

‘Nay,’ said the knight ; ‘for no such
passion mine.

But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle
out

Among us in the jousts, while women
watch

Who wins, who falls ; and waste the
spiritual strength

Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.’

To whom the monk : ‘The Holy
Grail !—I trust

We are green in Heaven's eyes ; but here
too much

We moulder—as to things without I
mean—

Yet one of your own knights, a guest of
ours,

Told us of this in our refectory,

But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What
is it ?

The phantom of a cup that comes and
goes ?’

‘Nay, monk ! what phantom ?’ answer'd
Percivale.

‘The cup, the cup itself, from which our
Lord

Drank at the last sad supper with his
own.

This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good
saint

Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our
Lord.

And there awhile it bode ; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at
once,

By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and dis-
appear'd.’

To whom the monk : ‘From our old
books I know

That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to
build ;

And there he built with wattles from the
marsh

A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but
seem

Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day ?’

‘A woman,’ answer'd Percivale, ‘a
nun,

And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister ; and if ever holy maid

With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid ; tho' never maiden glow'd,

But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human
love,

Which being rudely blunted, glanced and
shot

Only to holy things ; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And
yet,

Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous
race,

Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the
more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or
what

Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King
Arthur made

His Table Round, and all men's hearts
became

Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come
again ;

But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it
would come,

And heal the world of all their wickedness !
"O Father !" ask'd the maiden, "might
it come

To me by prayer and fasting ?" "Nay,"
said he,

"I know not, for thy heart is pure as
snow."

And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and
I thought

She might have risen and floated when I
saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with
me.

And when she came to speak, behold her
eyes

Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness.

And "O my brother Percivale," she said,

"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy
Grail :

For, waked at dead of night, I heard a
sound

As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's
use

To hunt by moonlight' ; and the slender
sound

As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch
with hand,

Was like that music as it came ; and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver
beam,

And down the long beam stole the Holy
Grail,

Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were
dyed

With rosy colours leaping on the wall ;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the
walls

The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and
pray,

And tell thy brother knights to fast and
pray,

That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be
heal'd."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake
of this

To all men ; and myself fasted and
pray'd

Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever
moved

Among us in white armour, Galahad.
"God make thee good as thou art beau-
tiful,"

Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight ;
and none,

In so young youth, was ever made a knight

Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard

My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd

Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

'Sister or brother none had he; but some

Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said

Begotten by enchantment — chatteringers they,

Like birds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies—we know not whence they come;

For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away

Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair

Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;

And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread

And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;

And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,

Saying, "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,

O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,

I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.

Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,

And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king

Far in the spiritual city": and as she spake

She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind

On him, and he believed in her belief.

'Then came a year of miracle: O brother,

In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,

Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures; and in and out

The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin call'd it "The Siege perilous,"

Perilous for good and ill; "for there," he said,

"No man could sit but he should lose himself":

And once by misadventence Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,

While the great banquet lay along the hall,

That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard

A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day:

And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail

All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.

But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

'I sware a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride

A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun

My sister saw it ; and Galahad sware the
vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin,
sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among
the knights,
And Gawain sware, and louder than the
rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, ask-
ing him,
'What said the King? Did Arthur take
the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale,
'the King,

Was not in hall : for early that same day,
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help : for all her shining hair
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky
arm

Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all
she wore

Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
In tempest : so the King arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those
wild bees

That made such honey in his realm.
Howbeit

Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot ; whence the
King

Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there !
the roofs

Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder-
smoke !

Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the
bolt."

For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under
heaven.

'O brother, had you known our mighty
hall,

Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago !
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,

By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing
brook,

Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin
built.

And four great zones of sculpture, set
betwixt

With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall :
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing
wings,

And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern
Star.

And eastward fronts the statue, and the
crown

And both the wings are made of gold,
and flame

At sunrise till the people in far fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, "We have still a King."

'And, brother, had you known our hall
within,

Broader and higher than any in all the
lands !

Where twelve great windows blazon
Arthur's wars,

And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of
our King.

Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount
and mere,

Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank : and who shall blazon it ?
when and how ?—

O there, perchance, when all our wars are
done,

The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

'So to this hall full quickly rode the
King,

In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish,
wrapt

In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.

And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all :
And many of those who burnt the hold,
their arms

Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with
smoke, and sear'd,

Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest : and then the
King

Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"
(Because the hall was all in tumult—some
Vowing, and some protesting), "what is
this?"

"O brother, when I told him what had
chanced,

My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than
once,

When some brave deed seem'd to be done
in vain,

Darken ; and "Woe is me, my knights,"
he cried,

"Had I been here, ye had not sworn
the vow."

Bold was mine answer. "Had thyself
been here,

My King, thou wouldst have sworn."
"Yea, yea," said he,

"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the
Grail?"

"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I
saw the light,

But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw."

"Then when he ask'd us, knight by
knight, if any

Had seen it, all their answers were as
one :

"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn
our vows."

"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye
seen a cloud?

What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in
a voice

Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,

"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.'"

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the
King, "for such

As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"
(Brother, the King was hard upon his
knights)

"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will
sing.

Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger
knight,

Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor
Percivales"

(For thus it pleased the King to range
me close

After Sir Galahad); "nay," said he,
"but men

With strength and will to right the
wrong'd, of power

To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles
splash'd and dyed

The strong White Horse in his own
heathen blood—

But one hath seen, and all the blind will
see.

Go, since your vows are sacred, being
made :

Yet—for ye know the cries of all my
realm

Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my
knights,

Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come
and go

Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering
fires

Lost in the quagmire ! Many of you, yea
most,

Return no more : ye think I show myself

Too dark a prophet : come now, let us
meet
The morrow morn once more in one full
field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the
King,
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may
count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his
knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

"So when the sun broke next from
underground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur
came ;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their
heat,
Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Perci-
vale !"

"But when the next day brake from
underground—
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would
fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim ; for where
the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass ; and lower, and
where the long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the
necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers
of flowers
Fell as we past ; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by
name,
Calling "God speed !" but in the ways
below

The knights and ladies wept, and rich
and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly
speak
For grief, and all in middle street the
Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd
aloud,
"This madness has come on us for our
sins."
So to the Gate of the three Queens we
came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mys-
tically,
And thence departed every one his way.

"And I was lifted up in heart, and
thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down
the knights,
So many and famous names ; and never
yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth
so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I
knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

"Thereafter, the dark warning of our
King,
That most of us would follow wandering
fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my
mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of
old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, "This Quest is not for
thee."
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death ;
And I, too, cried, "This Quest is not for
thee."

"And on I rode, and when I thought
my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then
a brook,

With one sharp rapid, where the crisping
white

Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye ; and o'er the
brook

Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest
here,"

I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest";
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning ; and fair the house whereby she
sat,

And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious ; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who
should say,

"Rest here"; but when I touch'd her,
lo ! she, too,

Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe ; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my
thirst.

Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the
world,

And where it smote the plowshare in the
field,

The plowman left his plowing, and fell
down

Before it ; where it glitter'd on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell
down

Before it, and I knew not why, but
thought

"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved

In golden armour with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels ; and his horse
In golden armour jewell'd everywhere :

And on the splendour came, flashing me
blind ;

And seem'd to me the Lord of all the
world,

Being so huge. But when I thought he
meant

To crush me, moving on me, lo ! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he
came,

And up I went and touch'd him, and he,
too,

Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and
thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty
hill,

And on the top, a city wall'd : the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into
heaven.

And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd ; and
these

Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Perci-
vale !

Thou mightiest and thou purest among
men !"

And glad was I and clomb, but found at
top

No man, nor any voice. And thence I
past

Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there ; but
there I found

Only one man of an exceeding age.
"Where is that goodly company," said I,

"That so cried out upon me?" and he
had

Scarce any voice to answer, and yet
gasp'd,

"Whence and what art thou?" and even
as he spoke

Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried in
grief,

"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust."

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the
vale

Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,

To whom I told my phantoms, and he
said :

“O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all ;
For when the Lord of all things made
Himself

Naked of glory for His mortal change,
‘Take thou my robe,’ she said, ‘for all
is thine,’

And all her form shone forth with sudden
light

So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow’d Him down, and like a flying
star

Led on the gray-hair’d wisdom of the east ;
But her thou hast not known : for what
is this

Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy
sins ?

Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad.” When the hermit made
an end,

In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and enter’d, and we knelt in
prayer.

And there the hermit slaked my burning
thirst,

And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone ; but he,

“Saw ye no more ? I, Galahad, saw
the Grail,

The Holy Grail, descend upon the
shrine :

I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went ;
And hither am I come ; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to
see,

This Holy Thing, fail’d from my side, nor
come

Cover’d, but moving with me night and
day,

Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken’d
marsh

Blood-red, and on the naked mountain
top

Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this

I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,

And past thro’ Pagan realms, and made
them mine,

And clash’d with Pagan hordes, and bore
them down,

And broke thro’ all, and in the strength
of this

Come victor. But my time is hard at
hand,

And hence I go ; and one will crown me
king

Far in the spiritual city ; and come thou,
too,

For thou shalt see the vision when I go.”

‘While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling
on mine,

Drew me, with power upon me, till I
grew

One with him, to believe as he believed.

Then, when the day began to wane, we
went.

‘There rose a hill that none but man
could climb,

Scarr’d with a hundred wintry water-
courses—

Storm at the top, and when we gain’d it,
storm

Round us and death ; for every moment
glanced

His silver arms and gloom’d : so quick
and thick

The lightnings here and there to left and
right

Struck, till the dry old trunks about us,
dead,

Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire : and at the base we found

On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,

Part black, part whiten’d with the bones
of men,

Not to be crost, save that some ancient
king

Had built a way, where, link’d with
many a bridge,

A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.

And Galahad fled along them bridge by
bridge,

And every bridge as quickly as he crost

Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I
yearn'd

To follow ; and thrice above him all the
heavens

Open'd and blazed with thunder such as
seem'd

Shoutings of all the sons of God : and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,

In silver-shining armour starry-clear ;
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung

Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,

If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed

again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—

And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?

And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,

For now I knew the veil had been with-
drawn.

Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars

Down on the waste, and straight beyond
the star

I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—

No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—
Strike from the sea ; and from the star

there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there

Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.

Then fell the floods of heaven drowning
the deep.

And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives ; but that I touch'd

The chapel-doors at dawn I know ; and
thence

Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vexed me more,

return'd
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's

Wars.'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius,—'for
in sooth

These ancient books—and they would win
thee—teem,

Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,

Not all unlike ; which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary with ease,

Till my head swims ; and then go forth
and pass

Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest

To these old walls—and mingle with our
folk ;

And knowing every honest face of theirs
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,

And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,

And ills and aches, and teething ; lyings-
in,

And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
That have no meaning half a league away :

Or lulling random squabbles when they
rise,

Chafferings and chatterings at the market-
cross,

Rejoice, small man, in this small world
of mine,

Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,

Came ye on none but phantoms in your
quest,

No man, no woman ?'

Then Sir Percivale :

'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms. O, my

brother,
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee

How far I falter'd from my quest and vow ?
For after I had lain so many nights,

A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to

wan
And meagre, and the vision had not

come ;
And then I chanced upon a goodly town

With one great dwelling in the middle
of it ;

Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower :

But when they led me into hall, behold,
The Princess of that castle was the one,

Brother, and that one only, who had ever

Made my heart leap ; for when I moved
of old

A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing : yet we
twain

Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state
were hers.

And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me ; for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old ; till one fair
morn,

I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first
time,

And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning
word,

That most of us would follow wandering
fires,

And the Quest faded in my heart. Anon,
The heads of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and
tongue :

"We have heard of thee : thou art our
greatest knight,

Our Lady says it, and we well believe :
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land."
O me, my brother ! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own
self,

And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her ;
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her, nor anything upon
earth.'

Then said the monk, 'Poor men, when
yule is cold,

Must be content to sit by little fires.
And this am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little ; yea, and blest be Heaven

That brought thee here to this poor house
of ours

Where all the brethren are so hard, to
warm

My cold heart with a friend : but O the
pity

To find thine own first love once more—
to hold,

Hold her a wealthy bride within thine
arms,

Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.
For we that want the warmth of double
life,

We that are plagued with dreams of
something sweet

Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance. Saw ye none be-
side,

None of your knights ?'

'Yea so,' said Percivale :

'One night my pathway swerving east, I
saw

The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
All in the middle of the rising moon :
And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him,
and he me,

And each made joy of either ; then he
ask'd,

"Where is he ? hast thou seen him—
Lancelot ?—Once,"

Said good Sir Bors, "he dash'd across me
—mad,

And maddening what he rode : and when
I cried,

'Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy,' Lancelot shouted, 'Stay me not !
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way.'
So vanish'd."

'Then Sir Bors had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd ;

For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship
him

That ill to him is ill to them ; to Bors
Beyond the rest : he well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have
seen,

The Holy Cup of healing ; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the Holy Quest :
If God would send the vision, well : if not,
The Quest and he were in the hands of
Heaven.

‘ And then, with small adventure met,
Sir Bors

Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their
craggs,

Our race and blood, a remnant that were
left

Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven : and
their wise men

Were strong in that old magic which can
trace

The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at
him

And this high Quest as at a simple thing :
Told him he follow'd—almost Arthur's
words—

A mocking fire : “ what other fire than
he,

Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom
blows,

And the sea rolls, and all the world is
warm'd ? ”

And when his answer chafed them, the
rough crowd,

Hearing he had a difference with their
priests,

Seized him, and bound and plunged him
into a cell

Of great piled stones ; and lying bounden
there

In darkness thro' innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens
sweep

Over him till by miracle—what else ?—
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and
fell,

Such as no wind could move : and thro'
the gap

Glimmer'd the streaming scud : then
came a night

Still as the day was loud ; and thro' the
gap

The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table
Round—

For, brother, so one night, because they
roll

Thro' such a round in heaven, we named
the stars,

Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—
And these, like bright eyes of familiar
friends,

In on him shone : “ And then to me, to
me,”

Said good Sir Bors, “ beyond all hopes
of mine,

Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for
myself—

Across the seven clear stars—O grace to
me—

In colour like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd
A sharp quick thunder.” Afterwards, a
maid,

Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.’

To whom the monk : ‘ And I remember
now

That pelican on the casque : Sir Bors it
was

Who spake so low and sadly at our board ;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he :

A square-set man and honest ; and his
eyes,

An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a
cloud,

But heaven had meant it for a sunny one :
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else ? But when
ye reach'd

The city, found ye all your knights re-
turn'd,

Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what
the King ? ’

Then answer'd Percivale : " And that
can I,

Brother, and truly ; since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again,
But sit within the house. O, when we
reach'd

The city, our horses stumbling as they
trode

On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cocka-
trices,

And shatter'd talbots, which had left the
stones

Raw, that they fell from, brought us to
the hall.

" And there sat Arthur on the daïs-
throne,

And those that had gone out upon the
Quest,

Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of
them,

And those that had not, stood before the
King,

Who, when he saw me, rose, and bad
me hail,

Saying, " A welfare in thine eye reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford.
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings ;
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of
ours,

And from the statue Merlin moulded for
us

Half-wrench'd a golden wing ; but now—
the Quest,

This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glaston-
bury ? "

" So when I told him all thyself hast
heard,

Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning,
ask'd

Of Gawain, " Gawain, was this Quest for
thee ? "

" " Nay, lord," said Gawain, " not for
such as I.

Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the Quest was not
for me ;

For I was much awearied of the Quest :
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it ; and then this
gale

Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort ; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant
to me."

" He ceased ; and Arthur turn'd to
whom at first

He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering,
push'd

Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught
his hand,

Held it, and there, half-hidden by him,
stood,

Until the King espied him, saying to him,
" Hail, Bors ! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail " ;
and Bors,

" Ask me not, for I may not speak of it :
I saw it " ; and the tears were in his eyes.

" Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for
the rest

Spake but of sundry perils in the storm ;
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last ;
" Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the
King, " my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for
thee ? "

" " Our mightiest ! " answer'd Lancelot,
with a groan ;

" O King ! "—and when he paused,
methought I spied

A dying fire of madness in his eyes—

" O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for
slime,

Slime of the ditch : but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,

Noble, and knightly in me twined and
 clung
 Round that one sin, until the wholesome
 flower
 And poisonous grew together, each as
 each,
 Not to be pluck'd asunder ; and when thy
 knights
 Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
 That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
 They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I
 spake
 To one most holy saint, who wept and
 said,
 That save they could be pluck'd asunder,
 all
 My quest were but in vain ; to whom I
 vow'd
 That I would work according as he will'd.
 And forth I went, and while I yearn'd
 and strove
 To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
 My madness came upon me as of old,
 And whipt me into waste fields far away ;
 There was I beaten down by little men,
 Mean knights, to whom the moving of
 my sword
 And shadow of my spear had been enow
 To scare them from me once ; and then
 I came
 All in my folly to the naked shore,
 Wide flats, where nothing but coarse
 grasses grew ;
 But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
 So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
 Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
 Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the
 sea
 Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
 Swept like a river, and the clouded
 heavens
 Were shaken with the motion and the
 sound.
 And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a
 boat,
 Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a
 chain ;
 And in my madness to myself I said,
 ' I will embark and I will lose myself,
 And in the great sea wash away my sin.'

I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
 Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
 And with me drove the moon and all the
 stars ;
 And the wind fell, and on the seventh
 night
 I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
 And felt the boat shock earth, and looking
 up,
 Behold, the enchanted towers of Car-
 bonek,
 A castle like a rock upon a rock,
 With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
 And steps that met the breaker ! there
 was none
 Stood near it but a lion on each side
 That kept the entry, and the moon was
 full.
 Then from the boat I leapt, and up the
 stairs.
 There drew my sword. With sudden-
 flaring manes
 Those two great beasts rose upright like
 a man,
 Each gript a shoulder, and I stood
 between ;
 And, when I would have smitten them,
 heard a voice,
 ' Doubt not, go forward ; if thou doubt,
 the beasts
 Will tear thee piecemeal.' Then with
 violence
 The sword was dash'd from out my hand,
 and fell.
 And up into the sounding hall I past ;
 But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
 No bench nor table, painting on the wall
 Or shield of knight ; only the rounded
 moon
 Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
 But always in the quiet house I heard,
 Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
 A sweet voice singing in the topmost
 tower
 To the eastward : up I climb'd a thousand
 steps
 With pain : as in a dream I seem'd to
 climb
 For ever : at the last I reach'd a door,
 A light was in the crannies, and I heard,

'Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail.'
Then in my madness I essay'd the door ;
It gave ; and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd
away—

O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings
and eyes.

And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I
saw

That which I saw ; but what I saw was
veil'd

And cover'd ; and this Quest was not for
me."

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lance-
lot left

The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish
words,—

A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his
King,—

Well, I will tell thee : "O King, my
liege," he said,

"Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of
thine?

When have I stinted stroke in foughten
field?

But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men
mad,

Yea, made our mightiest madder than
our least.

But by mine eyes and by mine ears I
swear,

I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward."

"Deafer," said the blameless King,
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.

But if indeed there came a sign from
heaven,

Blessed are Bors, Lancelot and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their
sight.

For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could
but speak

His music by the framework and the
chord ;

And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

"Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot :
never yet

Could all of true and noble in knight and
man

Twine round one sin, whatever it might
be,

With such a closeness, but apart there
grew,

Save that he were the swine thou spakest
of,

Some root of knighthood and pure noble-
ness ;

Whereto see thou, that it may bear its
flower.

"And spake I not too truly, O my
knights?

Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wan-
dering fires,

Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and
gone,

And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order—scarce return'd a
tith—

And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw ;
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right them-
selves,

Cares but to pass into the silent life.

And one hath had the vision face to
face,

And now his chair desires him here in
vain,

However they may crown him elsewhere.

“ And some among you held, that if
 the King
 Had seen the sight he would have sworn
 the vow :
 Not easily, seeing that the King must
 guard
 That which he rules, and is but as the hind
 To whom a space of land is given to
 plow.
 Who may not wander from the allotted
 field
 Before his work be done ; but, being done,
 Let visions of the night or of the day
 Come, as they will ; and many a time
 they come,
 Until this earth he walks on seems not
 earth,
 This light that strikes his eyeball is not
 light,
 This air that smites his forehead is not air
 But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
 In moments when he feels he cannot die,
 And knows himself no vision to himself,
 Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
 Who rose again : ye have seen what ye
 have seen.”

‘ So spake the King : I knew not all
 he meant.’

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE

KING ARTHUR made new knights to fill
 the gap
 Left by the Holy Quest ; and as he sat
 In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors
 Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a
 youth,
 Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
 Past, and the sunshine came along with
 him.

‘ Make me thy knight, because I know,
 Sir King,
 All that belongs to knighthood, and I love.’
 Such was his cry : for having heard the
 King
 Had let proclaim a tournament—the prize
 A golden circlet and a knightly sword,
 Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won

The golden circlet, for himself the sword :
 And there were those who knew him near
 the King,
 And promised for him : and Arthur made
 him knight.

And this new knight, Sir Pelleas of the
 isles—

But lately come to his inheritance,
 And lord of many a barren isle was he—
 Riding at noon, a day or twain before,
 Across the forest call'd of Dean, to find
 Caerleon and the King, had felt the sun
 Beat like a strong knight on his helm,
 and reel'd

Almost to falling from his horse ; but
 saw

Near him a mound of even-sloping side,
 Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew,
 And here and there great hollies under
 them ;

But for a mile all round was open space,
 And fern and heath : and slowly Pelleas
 drew

To that dim day, then binding his good
 horse

To a tree, cast himself down ; and as he
 lay

At random looking over the brown earth
 Thro' that green-glooming twilight of the
 grove,

It seem'd to Pelleas that the fern without
 Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,
 So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it.
 Then o'er it crost the dimness of a cloud
 Floating, and once the shadow of a bird
 Flying, and then a fawn ; and his eyes
 closed.

And since he loved all maidens, but no
 maid

In special, half-awake he whisper'd,
 ‘ Where ?

O where ? I love thee, tho' I know thee
 not.

For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
 And I will make thee with my spear and
 sword

As famous—O my Queen, my Guinevere,
 For I will be thine Arthur when we
 meet.’

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk
And laughter at the limit of the wood,
And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,
Strange as to some old prophet might
have seem'd

A vision hovering on a sea of fire,
Damsels in divers colours like the cloud
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them
On horses, and the horses richly trapt
Breast-high in that bright line of bracken
stood :

And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,
And one was pointing this way, and one
that,

Because the way was lost.

And Pelleas rose,
And loosed his horse, and led him to the
light.

There she that seem'd the chief among
them said,

'In happy time behold our pilot-star !
Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,
Arm'd as ye see, to tilt against the knights
There at Caerleon, but have lost our way :
To right ? to left ? straight forward ? back
again ?

Which ? tell us quickly.'

Pelleas gazing thought,
'Is Guinevere herself so beautiful ?'
For large her violet eyes look'd, and her
bloom

A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,
And round her limbs, mature in woman-
hood ;

And slender was her hand and small her
shape ;

And but for those large eyes, the haunts
of scorn,

She might have seem'd a toy to trifle with,
And pass and care no more. But while
he gazed

The beauty of her flesh abash'd the boy,
As tho' it were the beauty of her soul :
For as the base man, judging of the good,
Puts his own baseness in him by default
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend
All the young beauty of his own soul to
hers,

Believing her ; and when she spake to
him,
Stammer'd, and could not make her a
reply.

For out of the waste islands had he come,
Wheresaving his own sisters he had known
Scarce any but the women of his isles,
Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd
against the gulls,
Makers of nets, and living from the sea,

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady
round

And look'd upon her people ; and as when
A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,
The circle widens till it lip the marge,
Spread the slow smile thro' all her com-
pany.

Three knights were thereamong ; and they
too smiled,

Scorning him ; for the lady was Ettarre,
And she was a great lady in her land.

Again she said, 'O wild and of the
woods,
Knowest thou not the fashion of our
speech ?

Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair
face,

Lacking a tongue ?'

'O damsel,' answer'd he,
'I woke from dreams ; and coming out
of gloom

Was dazzled by the sudden light, and
crave

Pardon : but will ye to Caerleon ? I
Go likewise : shall I lead you to the King ?'

'Lead then,' she said ; and thro' the
woods they went.

And while they rode, the meaning in his
eyes,

His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,
His broken utterances and bashfulness,
Were all a burthen to her, and in her
heart

She mutter'd, 'I have lighted on a fool,
Raw, yet so stale !' But since her mind
was bent

On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name

And title, 'Queen of Beauty,' in the lists
Cried—and beholding him so strong, she
thought
That peradventure he will fight for me,
And win the circlet: therefore flatter'd
him,
Being so gracious, that he wellnigh deem'd
His wish by hers was echo'd; and her
knights
And all her damsels too were gracious to
him,
For she was a great lady.

And when they reach'd
Caerleon, ere they past to lodging, she,
Taking his hand, 'O the strong hand,'
she said,
'See! look at mine! but wilt thou fight
for me,
And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,
That I may love thee?'

Then his helpless heart
Leapt, and he cried, 'Ay! wilt thou if I
win?'
'Ay, that will I,' she answer'd, and she
laugh'd,
And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it
from her;
Then glanced askew at those three knights
of hers,
Till all her ladies laugh'd along with her.

'O happy world,' thought Pelleas, 'all,
meseems,
Are happy; I the happiest of them all.'
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his
blood,
And green wood-ways, and eyes among
the leaves;
Then being on the morrow knighted,
sware
To love one only. And as he came away,
The men who met him rounded on their
heels
And wonder'd after him, because his face
Shone like the countenance of a priest of
old
Against the flame about a sacrifice
Kindled by fire from heaven; so glad
was he.

Then Arthur made vast banquets, and
strange knights
From the four winds came in: and each
one sat,
Tho' served with choice from air, land,
stream, and sea,
Oft in mid-banquet measuring with his
eyes
His neighbour's make and might: and
Pelleas look'd
Noble among the noble, for he dream'd
His lady loved him, and he knew himself
Loved of the King: and him his new-
made knight
Worshipt, whose lightest whisper moved
him more
Than all the ranged reasons of the world.

Then blush'd and brake the morning
of the jousts,
And this was call'd 'The Tournament of
Youth':
For Arthur, loving his young knight,
withheld
His older and his mightier from the lists,
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,
According to her promise, and remain
Lord of the tourney. And Arthur had
the jousts
Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk
Holden: the gilded parapets were crown'd
With faces, and the great tower fill'd with
eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the
field
With honour: so by that strong hand of
his
The sword and golden circlet were
achieved.

Then rang the shout his lady loved:
the heat
Of pride and glory fired her face; her eye
Sparkled; she caught the circlet from his
lance,
And there before the people crown'd
herself:
So for the last time she was gracious to
him.

Then at Caerleon for a space—her look
Bright for all others, cloudier on her
knight—

Linger'd Ettarre: and seeing Pelleas
droop,

Said Guinevere, 'We marvel at thee
much,

O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
To him who won thee glory!' And she
said,

'Had ye not held your Lancelot in your
bower,

My Queen, he had not won.' Whereat
the Queen,

As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went
her way.

But after, when her damsels, and her-
self,

And those three knights all set their
faces home,

Sir Pelleas follow'd. She that saw him
cried,

'Damsels—and yet I should be shamed
to say it—

I cannot bide Sir Baby. Keep him back
Among yourselves. Would rather that
we had

Some rough old knight who knew the
worldly way,

Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride

And jest with: take him to you, keep
him off,

And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their
boys.

Nay, should ye try him with a merry one
To find his mettle, good: and if he fly
us,

Small matter! let him.' This her
damsels heard,

And mindful of her small and cruel hand,
They, closing round him thro' the journey
home,

Acted her hest, and always from her side
Restrain'd him with all manner of device,
So that he could not come to speech
with her.

And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang
the bridge,

Down rang the grate of iron thro' the
groove,

And he was left alone in open field.

'These be the ways of ladies,' Pelleas
thought,

'To those who love them, trials of our
faith.

Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
For loyal to the uttermost am I.'

So made his moan; and, darkness falling,
sought

A priory not far off, there lodged, but
rose

With morning every day, and, moist or
dry,

Full-arm'd upon his charger all day long
Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to
him.

And this persistence turn'd her scorn
to wrath.

Then calling her three knights, she
charged them, 'Out!

And drive him from the walls.' And out
they came,

But Pelleas overthrew them as they
dash'd

Against him one by one; and these
return'd,

But still he kept his watch beneath the
wall.

Thereon her wrath became a hate;
and once,

A week beyond, while walking on the
walls

With her three knights, she pointed
downward, 'Look,

He haunts me—I cannot breathe—be-
sieves me;

Down! strike him! put my hate into
your strokes,

And drive him from my walls.' And
down they went,

And Pelleas overthrew them one by one;
And from the tower above him cried

Ettarre,

'Bind him, and bring him in.'

He heard her voice ;
Then let the strong hand, which had
overthrown
Her minion-knights, by those he over-
threw
Be bounden straight, and so they brought
him in.

Then when he came before Ettarre,
the sight
Of her rich beauty made him at one
glance
More bondsmen in his heart than in his
bonds.
Yet with good cheer he spake, 'Behold
me, Lady,
A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will ;
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,
Content am I so that I see thy face
But once a day : for I have sworn my
vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I
know
That all these pains are trials of my faith,
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me
strain'd
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy
knight.'

Then she began to rail so bitterly,
With all her damsels, he was stricken
mute ;
But when she mock'd his vows and the
great King,
Lighted on words : 'For pity of thine
own self,
Peace, Lady, peace : is he not thine and
mine ?'
'Thou fool,' she said, 'I never heard his
voice
But long'd to break away. Unbind him
now,
And thrust him out of doors ; for save
he be
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,
He will return no more.' And those, her
three,
Laugh'd, and unbound, and thrust him
from the gate.

And after this, a week beyond, again
She call'd them, saying, 'There he
watches yet,
There like a dog before his master's door !
Kick'd, he returns : do ye not hate him,
ye ?
Ye know yourselves : how can ye bide at
peace,
Affronted with his fulsome innocence ?
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,
No men to strike ? Fall on him all at
once,
And if ye slay him I reckon not : if ye fail,
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,
Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in :
It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds.'

She spake ; and at her will they couch'd
their spears,
Three against one : and Gawain passing
by,
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw
Low down beneath the shadow of those
towers
A villainy, three to one : and thro' his
heart
The fire of honour and all noble deeds
Flash'd, and he call'd, 'I strike upon thy
side—
The caitiffs !' 'Nay,' said Pelleas, 'but
forbear ;
He needs no aid who doth his lady's will.'

So Gawain, looking at the villainy done,
Forbore, but in his heat and eagerness
Trembled and quiver'd, as the dog, with-
held
A moment from the vermin that he sees
Before him, shivers, ere he springs and
kills.

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to
three ;
And they rose up, and bound, and brought
him in.
Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas,
burn'd
Full on her knights in many an evil name
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten
hound :

'Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,
Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,
And let who will release him from his bonds.
And if he comes again'—there she brake short ;
And Pelleas answer'd, 'Lady, for indeed I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful, I cannot brook to see your beauty marr'd Thro' evil spite : and if ye love me not, I cannot bear to dream you so forsworn : I had liefer ye were worthy of my love, Than to be loved again of you—farewell ; And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love, Vex not yourself : ye will not see me more.'

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man
Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought,
'Why have I push'd him from me? this man loves,
If love there be : yet him I loved not. Why?
I deem'd him fool? yea, so? or that in him
A something—was it nobler than myself?—
Seem'd my reproach? He is not of my kind.
He could not love me, did he know me well.
Nay, let him go—and quickly.' And her knights
Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door.

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,
And flung them o'er the walls ; and afterward,
Shaking his hands, as from a lazar's rag,
'Faith of my body,' he said, 'and art thou not—
Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made
Knight of his table ; yea and he that won

The circlet? wherefore hast thou so defamed

Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,
As let these catiffs on thee work their will?'

And Pelleas answer'd, 'O, their wills are hers
For whom I won the circlet ; and mine, hers,
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face, Marr'd tho' it be with spite and mockery now,
Other than when I found her in the woods ;
And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite, And all to flout me, when they bring me in,
Let me be bounden, I shall see her face ; Else must I die thro' mine unhappiness.'

And Gawain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn,
'Why, let my lady bind me if she will, And let my lady beat me if she will : But an she send her delegate to thrall These fighting hands of mine—Christ kill me then
But I will slice him handleless by the wrist, And let my lady sear the stump for him, Howl as he may. But hold me for your friend :
Come, ye know nothing : here I pledge my troth,
Yea, by the honour of the Table Round, I will be leal to thee and work thy work, And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand.
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say
That I have slain thee. She will let me in
To hear the manner of thy fight and fall ; Then, when I come within her counsels, then
From prime to vespers will I chant thy praise
As prowtest knight and truest lover, more Than any have sung thee living, till she long

To have thee back in lusty life again,
Not to be bound, save by white bonds
and warm,
Dearer than freedom. Wherefore now
thy horse
And armour : let me go : be comforted :
Give me three days to melt her fancy,
and hope
The third night hence will bring thee
news of gold.'

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his
arms,
Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and
took
Gawain's, and said, 'Betray me not, but
help—
Art thou not he whom men call light-of-
love?'

'Ay,' said Gawain, 'for women be so
light.'
Then bounded forward to the castle walls,
And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,
And winded it, and that so musically
That all the old echoes hidden in the
wall
Rang out like hollow woods at hunting-
tide.

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower ;
'Avant,' they cried, 'our lady loves thee
not.'
But Gawain lifting up his vizor said,
'Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,
And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye
hate :
Behold his horse and armour. Open
gates,
And I will make you merry.'

And down they ran,
Her damsels, crying to their lady, 'Lo !
Pelleas is dead—he told us—he that hath
His horse and armour : will ye let him in ?
He slew him ! Gawain, Gawain of the
court,
Sir Gawain—there he waits below the
wall,
Blowing his bugle as who should say him
nay.'

And so, leave given, straight on thro'
open door
Rode Gawain, whom she greeted cour-
teously.
'Dead, is it so?' she ask'd. 'Ay, ay,'
said he,
'And oft in dying cried upon your name.'
'Pity on him,' she answer'd, 'a good
knight,
But never let me bide one hour at peace.'
'Ay,' thought Gawain, 'and you be fair
enow :
But I to your dead man have given my,
troth,
That whom ye loathe, him will I make
you love.'

So those three days, aimless about the
land,
Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering
Waited, until the third night brought a
moon
With promise of large light on woods and
ways.

Hot was the night and silent ; but a
sound
Of Gawain ever coming, and this lay—
Which Pelleas had heard sung before the
Queen,
And seen her sadden listening—vext his
heart,
And marr'd his rest—'A worm within the
rose.'

'A rose, but one, none other rose had I,
A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous
fair,
One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and
sky,
One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all
mine air—
I cared not for the thorns ; the thorns
were there.

'One rose, a rose to gather by and by,
One rose, a rose, to gather and to wear,
No rose but one—what other rose had I?
One rose, my rose ; a rose that will not
die,—
He dies who loves it,—if the worm be
there.'

This tender rhyme, and evermore the
 doubt,
 'Why lingers Gawain with his golden
 news?'
 So shook him that he could not rest, but
 rode
 Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his
 horse
 Hard by the gates. Wide open were the
 gates,
 And no watch kept; and in thro' these
 he past,
 And heard but his own steps, and his
 own heart
 Beating, for nothing moved but his own
 self,
 And his own shadow. Then he crost
 the court,
 And spied not any light in hall or bower,
 But saw the postern portal also wide
 Yawning; and up a slope of garden, all
 Of roses white and red, and brambles mixt
 And overgrowing them, went on, and
 found,
 Here too, all hush'd below the mellow
 moon,
 Save that one rivulet from a tiny cave
 Came lightening downward, and so spilt
 itself
 Among the roses, and was lost again.

Then was he ware of three pavilions
 rear'd
 Above the bushes, gilden-peakt: in one,
 Red after revel, droned her lurdane knights
 Slumbering, and their three squires across
 their feet:
 In one, their malice on the placid lip
 Froz'n by sweet sleep, four of her damsels
 lay:
 And in the third, the circlet of the jousts
 Bound on her brow, were Gawain and
 Ettarre.

Back, as a hand that pushes thro' the
 leaf
 To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew:
 Back, as a coward slinks from what he
 fears
 To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound

Beaten, did Pelleas in an utter shame
 Creep with his shadow thro' the court
 again,
 Fingering at his sword-handle until he
 stood
 There on the castle-bridge once more, and
 thought,
 'I will go back, and slay them where they
 lie.'

And so went back, and seeing them yet
 in sleep
 Said, 'Ye, that so dishallow the holy
 sleep,
 Your sleep is death,' and drew the sword,
 and thought,
 'What! slay a sleeping knight? the King
 hath bound
 And sworn me to this brotherhood';
 again,
 'Alas that ever a knight should be so
 false.'
 Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groan-
 ing laid
 The naked sword athwart their naked
 throats,
 There left it, and them sleeping; and she
 lay,
 The circlet of the tourney round her
 brows,
 And the sword of the tourney across her
 throat.

And forth he past, and mounting on
 his horse
 Stared at her towers that, larger than
 themselves
 In their own darkness, throng'd into the
 moon.
 Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs,
 and clench'd
 His hands, and madden'd with himself
 and moan'd:

'Would they have risen against me in
 their blood
 At the last day? I might have answer'd
 them
 Even before high God. O towers so
 strong,

Huge, solid, would that even while I gaze
The crack of earthquake shivering to your
base

Split you, and Hell burst up your harlot
roofs

Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro'
within,

Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a
skull !

Let the fierce east scream thro' your eyelet-
holes,

And whirl the dust of harlots round and
round

In dung and nettles ! hiss, snake—I saw
him there—

Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell. Who
yells

Here in the still sweet summer night, but
I—

I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her
fool ?

Fool, beast—he, she, or I ? myself most
fool ;

Beast too, as lacking human wit—dis-
graced,

Dishonour'd all for trial of true love—
Love ?—we be all alike : only the King
Hath made us fools and liars. O noble
vows !

O great and sane and simple race of brutes
That own no lust because they have no
law !

For why should I have loved her to my
shame ?

I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame.
I never loved her, I but lusted for her—
Away—'

He dash'd the rowel into his horse,
And bounded forth and vanish'd thro' the
night.

Then she, that felt the cold touch on
her throat,

Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd
herself

To Gawain : ' Liar, for thou hast not slain
This Pelleas ! here he stood, and might
have slain

Me and thyself.' And he that tells the tale

Says that her ever-veering fancy turn'd
To Pelleas, as the one true knight on
earth,

And only lover ; and thro' her love her
life

Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain.

But he by wild and way, for half the
night,

And over hard and soft, striking the sod
From out the soft, the spark from off the
hard,

Rode till the star above the wakening sun,
Beside that tower where Percivale was
cowl'd,

Glanced from the rosy forehead of the
dawn.

For so the words were flash'd into his
heart

He knew not whence or wherefore : ' O
sweet star,

Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn !'
And there he would have wept, but felt
his eyes

Harder and drier than a fountain bed
In summer : thither came the village girls
And linger'd talking, and they come no
more

Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from
the heights

Again with living waters in the change
Of seasons : hard his eyes ; harder his
heart

Seem'd ; but so weary were his limbs,
that he,

Gasping, ' Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,
Here let me rest and die,' cast himself
down,

And gulf'd his griefs in inmost sleep ; so
lay,

Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
The hall of Merlin, and the morning star
Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame,
and fell.

He woke, and being ware of some one
nigh,

Sent hands upon him, as to tear him,
crying,

' False ! and I held thee pure as Guinevere.'

But Percivale stood near him and replied,
 'Am I but false as Guinevere is pure?
 Or art thou mazed with dreams? or being one
 Of our free-spoken Table hast not heard
 That Lancelot'—there he check'd himself and paused.

Then fared it with Sir Pelleas as with one
 Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword
 That made it plunges thro' the wound again,
 And pricks it deeper: and he shrank and wail'd,
 'Is the Queen false?' and Percivale was mute.
 'Have any of our Round Table held their vows?'
 And Percivale made answer not a word.
 'Is the King true?' 'The King!' said Percivale.
 'Why then let men couple at once with wolves.
 What! art thou mad?'

But Pelleas, leaping up,
 Ran thro' the doors and vaulted on his horse
 And fled: small pity upon his horse had he,
 Or on himself, or any, and when he met
 A cripple, one that held a hand for alms—
 Hunch'd as he was, and like an old dwarf-elm
 That turns its back on the salt blast, the boy
 Paused not, but overrode him, shouting,
 'False,
 And false with Gawain!' and so left him bruised
 And batter'd, and fled on, and hill and wood
 Went ever streaming by him till the gloom,
 That follows on the turning of the world,
 Darken'd the common path: he twitch'd the reins,
 And made his beast that better knew it, swerve

Now off it and now on; but when he saw
 High up in heaven the hall that Merlin built,
 Blackening against the dead-green stripes of even,
 'Black nest of rats,' he groan'd, 'ye build too high.'

Not long thereafter from the city gates
 Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily,
 Warm with a gracious parting from the Queen,
 Peace at his heart, and gazing at a star
 And marvelling what it was: on whom the boy,
 Across the silent seeded meadow-grass
 Borne, clash'd: and Lancelot, saying,
 'What name hast thou
 That ridest here so blindly and so hard?'
 'No name, no name,' he shouted, 'a scourge am I
 To lash the treasons of the Table Round.'
 'Yea, but thy name?' 'I have many names,' he cried:
 'I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,
 And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast
 And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen.'
 'First over me,' said Lancelot, 'shalt thou pass.'
 'Fight therefore,' yell'd the youth, and either knight
 Drew back a space, and when they closed, at once
 The weary steed of Pelleas floundering flung
 His rider, who call'd out from the dark field,
 'Thou art false as Hell: slay me: I have no sword.'
 Then Lancelot, 'Yea, between thy lips—and sharp;
 But here will I disedge it by thy death.'
 'Slay then,' he shriek'd, 'my will is to be slain,'
 And Lancelot, with his heel upon the fall'n,

Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then
spake :
' Rise, weakling ; I am Lancelot ; say thy
say.'

And Lancelot slowly rode his warhorse
back
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark
field,
And follow'd to the city. It chanced that
both
Brake into hall together, worn and pale.
There with her knights and dames was
Guinevere.

Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot
So soon return'd, and then on Pelleas,
him

Who had not greeted her, but cast him-
self

Down on a bench, hard-breathing. ' Have
ye fought ?'

She ask'd of Lancelot. ' Ay, my Queen,'
he said.

' And thou hast overthrown him ?' ' Ay,
my Queen.'

Then she, turning to Pelleas, ' O young
knight,

Hath the great heart of knighthood in
thee fail'd

So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,
A fall from *him* ?' Then, for he answer'd
not,

' Or hast thou other griefs ? If I, the
Queen,

May help them, loose thy tongue, and let
me know.'

But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She quail'd ; and he, hissing ' I have no
sword,'

Sprang from the door into the dark.
The Queen

Look'd hard upon her lover, he on her ;
And each foresaw the dolorous day to
be :

And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey ;
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, ' The time is hard
at hand.'

THE LAST TOURNAMENT

DAGONET, the fool, whom Gawain in his
mood

Had made mock-knight of Arthur's Table
Round,

At Camelot, high above the yellowing
woods,

Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.

And toward him from the hall, with harp
in hand,

And from the crown thereof a carcanet
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize
Of Tristram in the jousts of yesterday,
Came Tristram, saying, ' Why skip ye
so, Sir Fool ?'

For Arthur and Sir Lancelot riding once
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock
Heard a child wail. A stump of oak
half-dead,

From roots like some black coil of carven
snakes,

Clutch'd at the crag, and started thro'
mid air

Bearing an eagle's nest : and thro' the tree
Rush'd ever a rainy wind, and thro' the
wind

Pierced ever a child's cry : and crag and
tree

Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous
nest,

This ruby necklace thrice around her neck,
And all unscarr'd from beak or talon,
brought

A maiden babe ; which Arthur pitying
took,

Then gave it to his Queen to rear : the
Queen

But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms
Received, and after loved it tenderly,
And named it Nestling ; so forgot herself
A moment, and her cares ; till that young
life

Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal
cold

Past from her ; and in time the carcanet
Vext her with plaintive memories of the
child :

So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,
 'Take thou the jewels of this dead in-
 nocence,
 And make them, an thou wilt, a tourney-
 prize.'

To whom the King, 'Peace to thine
 eagle-borne
 Dead nestling, and this honour after
 death,
 Following thy will ! but, O my Queen,
 I muse
 Why ye not wear on arm, or neck, or
 zone
 Those diamonds that I rescued from the
 tarn,
 And Lancelot won, methought, for thee
 to wear.'

'Would rather you had let them fall,'
 she cried,
 'Plunge and be lost—ill-fated as they
 were,
 A bitterness to me !—ye look amazed,
 Not knowing they were lost as soon as
 given—
 Slid from my hands, when I was leaning
 out
 Above the river—that unhappy child
 Past in her barge : but rosier luck will go
 With these rich jewels, seeing that they
 came
 Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,
 But the sweet body of a maiden babe.
 Perchance—who knows?—the purest of
 thy knights
 May win them for the purest of my maids.'

She ended, and the cry of a great jousts
 With trumpet-blowings ran on all the
 ways
 From Camelot in among the faded fields
 To furthest towers ; and everywhere the
 knights
 Arm'd for a day of glory before the King.

But on the hither side of that loud morn
 Into the hall stagger'd, his visage ribb'd
 From ear to ear with dogwhip-weals, his
 nose

Bridge-broken, one eye out, and one hand
 off,
 And one with shatter'd fingers dangling
 lame,
 A churl, to whom indignantly the King,

'My churl, for whom Christ died, what
 evil beast
 Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face ?
 or fiend ?
 Man was it who marr'd heaven's image
 in thee thus ?'

Then, sputtering thro' the hedge of
 splinter'd teeth,
 Yet strangers to the tongue, and with
 blunt stump
 Pitch-blacken'd sawing the air, said the
 maim'd churl,

'He took them and he drave them to
 his tower—
 Some hold he was a table-knight of thine—
 A hundred goodly ones—the Red Knight,
 he—
 Lord, I was tending swine, and the Red
 Knight
 Brake in upon me and drave them to his
 tower ;
 And when I call'd upon thy name as one
 That doest right by gentle and by churl,
 Maim'd me and maul'd, and would out-
 right have slain,
 Save that he sware me to a message,
 saying,
 "Tell thou the King and all his liars, that I
 Have founded my Round Table in the
 North,
 And whatsoever his own knights have
 sworn
 My knights have sworn the counter to
 it—and say
 My tower is full of harlots, like his court,
 But mine are worthier, seeing they profess
 To be none other than themselves—and say
 My knights are all adulterers like his own,
 But mine are truer, seeing they profess
 To be none other ; and say his hour is come,
 The heathen are upon him, his long lance
 Broken, and his Excalibur a straw."

Then Arthur turn'd to Kay the sene-
schal,
'Take thou my churl, and tend him
curiously
Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be
whole.
The heathen—but that ever-climbing
wave,
Hurl'd back again so often in empty foam,
Hath lain for years at rest—and renegades,
Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion,
whom
The wholesome realm is purged of other-
where,
Friends, thro' your manhood and your
fæalty,—now
Make their last head like Satan in the
North.
My younger knights, new-made, in whom
your flower
Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,
Move with me toward their quelling,
which achieved,
The loneliest ways are safe from shore to
shore.
But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place
Enchair'd to-morrow, arbitrate the field ;
For wherefore shouldst thou care to mingle
with it,
Only to yield my Queen her own again ?
Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent : is it
well ?'

Thereto Sir Lancelot answer'd, 'It is
well :
Yet better if the King abide, and leave
The leading of his younger knights to me.
Else, for the King has will'd it, it is well.'

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot follow'd
him,
And while they stood without the doors,
the King
Turn'd to him saying, 'Is it then so well ?
Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he
Of whom was written, "A sound is in his
ears" ?'
The foot that loiters, bidden go,—the
glance
That only seems half-loyal to command,—

A manner somewhat fall'n from rever-
ence—
Or have I dream'd the bearing of our
knights
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower ?
Or whence the fear lest this my realm,
uprear'd,
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
From flat confusion and brute violences,
Reel back into the beast, and be no
more ?'

He spoke, and taking all his younger
knights,
Down the slope city rode, and sharply
turn'd
North by the gate. In her high bower
the Queen,
Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,
Watch'd her lord pass, and knew not that
she sigh'd.
Then ran across her memory the strange
rhyme
Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who
knows ?
From the great deep to the great deep he
goes.'

But when the morning of a tournament,
By these in earnest those in mockery call'd
The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,
Brake with a wet wind blowing, Lancelot,
Round whose sick head all night, like
birds of prey,
The words of Arthur flying shriek'd, arose,
And down a streetway hung with folds of
pure
White samite, and by fountains running
wine,
Where children sat in white with cups of
gold,
Moved to the lists, and there, with slow
sad steps
Ascending, fill'd his double-dragon'd
chair.

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,
Dame, damsel, each thro' worship of their
Queen
White-robed in honour of the stainless
child,

And some with scatter'd jewels, like a
bank
Of maiden snow mingled with sparks of
fire.
He look'd but once, and vail'd his eyes
again.

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a
dream
To ears but half-awaked, then one low roll
Of Autumn thunder, and the jousts began :
And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf
And gloom and gleam, and shower and
shorn plume
Went down it. Sighing wearily, as one
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,
When all the goodlier guests are past away,
Sat their great umpire, looking o'er the
lists.
He saw the laws that ruled the tournament
Broken, but spake not ; once, a knight
cast down
Before his throne of arbitration cursed
The dead babe and the follies of the King ;
And once the laces of a helmet crack'd,
And show'd him, like a vermin in its hole,
Modred, a narrow face : anon he heard
The voice that billow'd round the barriers
roar
An ocean-sounding welcome to one knight,
But newly-enter'd, taller than the rest,
And armour'd all in forest green, whereon
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,
And wearing but a holly-spray for crest,
With ever-scattering berries, and on shield
A spear, a harp, a bugle—Tristram—late
From overseas in Brittany return'd,
And marriage with a princess of that realm,
Isolt the White—Sir Tristram of the
Woods—
Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime
with pain
His own against him, and now yearn'd to
shake
The burthen off his heart in one full shock
With Tristram ev'n to death : his strong
hands gript
And dinted the gilt dragons right and left,
Until he groan'd for wrath—so many of
those,

That ware their ladies' colours on the
casque,
Drew from before Sir Tristram to the
bounds,
And there with gibes and flickering
mockeries
Stood, while he mutter'd, 'Craven crests !
O shame !
What faith have these in whom they sware
to love ?
The glory of our Round Table is no more.'

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave,
the gems,
Not speaking other word than 'Hast thou
won ?
Art thou the purest, brother ? See, the hand
Wherewith thou takest this, is red !' to
whom
Tristram, half plagued by Lancelot's
languorous mood,
Made answer, 'Ay, but wherefore toss
me this
Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound ?
Let be thy fair Queen's fantasy. Strength
of heart
And might of limb, but mainly use and skill,
Are winners in this pastime of our King.
My hand—belike the lance hath dript
upon it—
No blood of mine, I trow ; but O chief
knight,
Right arm of Arthur in the battlefield,
Great brother, thou nor I have made the
world ;
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine.'

And Tristram round the gallery made
his horse
Caracole ; then bow'd his homage, bluntly
saying,
'Fair damsels, each to him who worships
each
Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold
This day my Queen of Beauty is not here.'
And most of these were mute, some anger'd,
one
Murmuring, 'All courtesy is dead,' and
one,
'The glory of our Round Table is no more.'

Then fell thick rain, plume droopt and
mantle clung,
And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day
Went glooming down in wet and weariness :

But under her black brows a swarthy one
Laugh'd shrilly, crying, 'Praise the patient
saints,

Our one white day of Innocence hath past,
Tho' somewhat draggled at the skirt. So
be it.

The snowdrop only, flowering thro' the
year,

Would make the world as blank as
Winter-tide.

Come—let us gladden their sad eyes, our
Queen's

And Lancelot's, at this night's solemnity
With all the kindlier colours of the field.'

So dame and damsel glitter'd at the
feast

Variouly gay : for he that tells the tale
Likened them, saying, as when an hour of
cold

Falls on the mountain in midsummer
snows,

And all the purple slopes of mountain
flowers

Pass under white, till the warm hour
returns

With veer of wind, and all are flowers
again ;

So dame and damsel cast the simple white,
And glowing in all colours, the live grass,
Rose-campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy,
glanced

About the revels, and with mirth so loud
Beyond all use, that, half-amazed, the
Queen,

And wroth at Tristram and the lawless
jousts,

Brake up their sports, then slowly to her
bower

Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord.

And little Dagonet on the morrow
morn,

High over all the yellowing Autumn-tide,
Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.

Then Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so,
Sir Fool?'

Wheel'd round on either heel, Dagonet
replied,

'Belike for lack of wiser company ;
Or being fool, and seeing too much wit
Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip
To know myself the wisest knight of all.'
'Ay, fool,' said Tristram, 'but 'tis eating
dry

To dance without a catch, a roundelay
To dance to.' Then he twangled on his
harp,

And while he twangled little Dagonet stood
Quiet as any water-sodden log
Stay'd in the wandering warble of a brook ;
But when the twangling ended, skipt again ;
And being ask'd, 'Why skipt ye not, Sir
Fool?'

Made answer, 'I had liefer twenty years
Skip to the broken music of my brains
Than any broken music thou canst make.'
Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to
come,

'Good now, what music have I broken,
fool?'

And little Dagonet, skipping, 'Arthur,
the King's ;

For when thou playest that air with Queen
Isolt,

Thou makest broken music with thy bride,
Her daintier namesake down in Brittany—
And so thou breakest Arthur's music too.'
'Save for that broken music in thy brains,
Sir fool,' said Tristram, 'I would break
thy head.

Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were
o'er,

The life had flown, we sware but by the
shell—

I am but a fool to reason with a fool—
Come, thou art crabb'd and sour : but
lean me down,

Sir Dagonet, one of thy long asses' ears,
And harken if my music be not true.

'“Free love—free field—we love but
while we may :

The woods are hush'd, their music is no
more :

The leaf is dead, the yearning past away :
New leaf, new life—the days of frost are
o'er :

New life, new love, to suit the newer day :
New loves are sweet as those that went
before :

Free love—free field—we love but while
we may."

'Ye might have moved slow-measure
to my tune,

Not stood stockstill. I made it in the
woods,

And heard it ring as true as tested gold.'

But Dagonet with one foot poised in
his hand,

'Friend, did ye mark that fountain
yesterday

Made to run wine?—but this had run
itself

All out like a long life to a sour end—

And them that round it sat with golden
cups

To hand the wine to whosoever came—

The twelve small damosels white as
Innocence,

In honour of poor Innocence the babe,
Who left the gems which Innocence the
Queen

Lent to the King, and Innocence the King
Gave for a prize—and one of those white
slips

Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,

"Drink, drink, Sir Fool," and thereupon
I drank,

Spat—pish—the cup was gold, the
draught was mud.'

And Tristram, 'Was it muddier than
thy gibes?

Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee?—
Not marking how the knighthood mock
thee, fool—

"Fear God : honour the King—his one
true knight—

Sole follower of the vows"—for here be
they

Who knew thee swine enow before I came,
Smuttier than blasted grain : but when
the King

Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up
It frightened all free fool from out thy heart ;
Which left thee less than fool, and less
than swine,

A naked aught—yet swine I hold thee still,
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee
swine.'

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet,
'Knight, an ye fling those rubies round
my neck

In lieu of hers, I'll hold thou hast some
touch

Of music, since I care not for thy pearls.
Swine? I have wallow'd, I have wash'd
—the world

Is flesh and shadow—I have had my day.
The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind
Hath foul'd me—an I wallow'd, then I
wash'd—

I have had my day and my philosophies—
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's
fool.

Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams
and geese

Troop'd round a Paynim harper once,
who thrumm'd

On such a wire as musically as thou
Some such fine song—but never a king's
fool.'

And Tristram, 'Then were swine,
goats, asses, geese

The wiser fools, seeing thy Paynim bard
Had such a mastery of his mystery
That he could harp his wife up out of hell.'

Then Dagonet, turning on the ball of
his foot,

'And whither harp'st thou thine? down!
and thyself

Down! and two more : a helpful harper
thou,

That harpest downward! Dost thou know
the star

We call the harp of Arthur up in heaven?'

And Tristram, 'Ay, Sir Fool, for when
our King

Was victor wellnigh day by day, the
knights,

Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills, and in the signs of
heaven.'

And Dagonet answer'd, 'Ay, and when
the land
Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set
yourself
To babble about him, all to show your
wit—
And whether he were King by courtesy,
Or King by right—and so went harping
down
The black king's highway, got so far, and
grew
So witty that ye play'd at ducks and
drakes
With Arthur's vows on the great lake of
fire.
Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the
star?'

'Nay, fool,' said Tristram, 'not in
open day.'
And Dagonet, 'Nay, nor will: I see it
and hear.
It makes a silent music up in heaven,
And I, and Arthur and the angels hear,
And then we skip.' 'Lo, fool,' he said,
'ye talk
Fool's treason: is the King thy brother
fool?'
Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and
shrill'd,
'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of
fools!

Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk
From burning spurge, honey from hornet-
combs,
And men from beasts—Long live the king
of fools!'

And down the city Dagonet danced
away;
But thro' the slowly-mellowing avenues
And solitary passes of the wood
Rode Tristram toward Lyonesse and
the west.
Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt
With ruby-circled neck, but evermore

Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye
For all that walk'd, or crept, or perch'd,
or flew.
Anon the face, as, when a gust hath
blown,
Unruffling waters re-collect the shape
Of one that in them sees himself, return'd;
But at the slot or fewmets of a deer,
Or ev'n a fall'n feather, vanish'd again.

So on for all that day from lawn to lawn
Thro' many a league-long bower he rode.
At length
A lodge of intertwisted beechen-boughs
Furze-cramm'd, and bracken-rooft, the
which himself
Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt
Against a shower, dark in the golden
grove
Appearing, sent his fancy back to where
She lived a moon in that low lodge with
him:
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish
King,
With six or seven, when Tristram was
away,
And snatch'd her thence; yet dreading
worse than shame
Her warrior Tristram, spake not any
word,
But bode his hour, devising wretchedness.

And now that desert lodge to Tristram
lookt
So sweet, that halting, in he past, and
sank
Down on a drift of foliage random-blown;
But could not rest for musing how to
smoothe
And sleek his marriage over to the Queen.
Perchance in lone Tintagil far from all
The tonguesters of the court she had not
heard.
But then what folly had sent him overseas
After she left him lonely here? a name?
Was it the name of one in Brittany,
Isolt, the daughter of the King? 'Isolt
Of the white hands' they call'd her: the
sweet name

Allured him first, and then the maid herself,
 Who served him well with those white hands of hers,
 And loved him well, until himself had thought
 He loved her also, wedded easily,
 But left her all as easily, and return'd.
 The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes
 Had drawn him home—what marvel?
 then he laid
 His brows upon the drifted leaf and dream'd.

He seem'd to pace the strand of Brittany
 Between Isolt of Britain and his bride,
 And show'd them both the ruby-chain,
 and both
 Began to struggle for it, till his Queen
 Graspt it so hard, that all her hand was red.
 Then cried the Breton, 'Look, her hand
 is red !
 These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,
 And melts within her hand—her hand is hot
 With ill desires, but this I gave thee, look,
 Is all as cool and white as any flower.'
 Follow'd a rush of eagle's wings, and then
 A whimpering of the spirit of the child,
 Because the twain had spoil'd her carcanet.

He dream'd ; but Arthur with a hundred spears
 Rode far, till o'er the illimitable reed,
 And many a glancing splash and fallow isle,
 The wide-wing'd sunset of the misty marsh
 Glared on a huge machicolated tower
 That stood with open doors, whereout
 was roll'd
 A roar of riot, as from men secure
 Amid their marshes, ruffians at their ease
 Among their harlot-brides, an evil song.
 'Lo there,' said one of Arthur's youth,
 for there,
 High on a grim dead tree before the tower,
 A goodly brother of the Table Round
 Swung by the neck : and on the boughs
 a shield

Showing a shower of blood in a field noir,
 And therebeside a horn, inflamed the knights
 At that dishonour done the gilded spur,
 Till each would clash the shield, and blow the horn.
 But Arthur waved them back. Alone he rode.
 Then at the dry harsh roar of the great horn,
 That sent the face of all the marsh aloft
 An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud
 Of shriek and plume, the Red Knight heard, and all,
 Even to tipmost lance and topmost helm,
 In blood-red armour sallying, howl'd to the King,

'The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash thee flat !—
 Lo ! art thou not that eunuch-hearted King
 Who fain had clipt free manhood from the world—
 The woman-worshipper? Yea, God's curse, and I !
 Slain was the brother of my paramour
 By a knight of thine, and I that heard her whine
 And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,
 Sware by the scorpion-worm that twists in hell,
 And stings itself to everlasting death,
 To hang whatever knight of thine I fought
 And tumbled. Art thou King?—Look to thy life !'

He ended : Arthur knew the voice ; the face
 Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the name
 Went wandering somewhere darkling in his mind.
 And Arthur deign'd not use of word or sword,
 But let the drunkard, as he stretch'd from horse
 To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,
 Down from the causeway heavily to the swamp

Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching
 wave,
 Heard in dead night along that table-
 shore,
 Drops flat, and after the great waters
 break
 Whitening for half a league, and thin
 themselves,
 Far over sands marbled with moon and
 cloud,
 From less and less to nothing; thus he fell
 Head-heavy; then the knights, who
 watch'd him, roar'd
 And shouted and leapt down upon the
 fall'n;
 There trampled out his face from being
 known,
 And sank his head in mire, and slimed
 themselves:
 Nor heard the King for their own cries,
 but sprang
 Thro' open doors, and swording right and
 left
 Men, women, on their sodden faces,
 hurl'd
 The tables over and the wines, and slew
 Till all the rafters rang with woman-yells,
 And all the pavement stream'd with
 massacre:
 Then, echoing yell with yell, they fired
 the tower,
 Which half that autumn night, like the
 live North,
 Red-pulsing up thro' Alioth and Alcor,
 Made all above it, and a hundred meres
 About it, as the water Moab saw
 Come round by the East, and out beyond
 them flush'd
 The long low dune, and lazy-plunging sea.

So all the ways were safe from shore to
 shore,
 But in the heart of Arthur pain was lord.

Then, out of Tristram waking, the red
 dream
 Fled with a shout, and that low lodge
 return'd,
 Mid-forest, and the wind among the
 boughs.

He whistled his good warhorse left to
 graze
 Among the forest greens, vaulted upon him,
 And rode beneath an ever-showering leaf,
 Till one lone woman, weeping near a
 cross,
 Stay'd him. 'Why weep ye?' 'Lord,'
 she said, 'my man
 Hath left me or is dead'; whereon he
 thought—
 'What, if she hate me now? I would
 not this.
 What, if she love me still? I would not
 that.
 I know not what I would'—but said to
 her,
 'Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate
 return,
 He find thy favour changed and love thee
 not'—
 Then pressing day by day thro' Lyonesse
 Last in a roky hollow, belling, heard
 The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly
 hounds
 Yelp at his heart, but turning, past and
 gain'd
 Tintagil, half in sea, and high on land,
 A crown of towers.

Down in a casement sat,
 A low sea-sunset glorying round her hair
 And glossy-throated grace, Isolt the
 Queen.
 And when she heard the feet of Tristram
 grind
 The spiring stone that scaled about her
 tower,
 Flush'd, started, met him at the doors,
 and there
 Belted his body with her white embrace,
 Crying aloud, 'Not Mark—not Mark,
 my soul!
 The footstep flutter'd me at first: not he:
 Catlike thro' his own castle steals my
 Mark,
 But warrior-wise thou stridest thro' his
 halls
 Who hates thee, as I him—ev'n to the
 death.
 My soul, I felt my hatred for my Mark

Quicken within me, and knew that thou wert nigh.'
 To whom Sir Tristram smiling, 'I am here.
 Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine.'

And drawing somewhat backward she replied,
 'Can he be wrong'd who is not ev'n his own,
 But save for dread of thee had beaten me,
 Scratch'd, bitten, blinded, marr'd me somehow—Mark?
 What rights are his that dare not strike for them?
 Not lift a hand—not, tho' he found me thus!
 But harken! have ye met him? hence he went
 To-day for three days' hunting—as he said—
 And so returns belike within an hour.
 Mark's way, my soul!—but eat not thou with Mark,
 Because he hates thee even more than fears;
 Nor drink: and when thou passest any wood
 Close vizzor, lest an arrow from the bush
 Should leave me all alone with Mark and hell.
 My God, the measure of my hate for Mark
 Is as the measure of my love for thee.'

So, pluck'd one way by hate and one by love,
 Drain'd of her force, again she sat, and spake
 To Tristram, as he knelt before her, saying,
 'O hunter, and O blower of the horn,
 Harper, and thou hast been a rover too,
 For, ere I mated with my shambling king,
 Ye twain had fallen out about the bride
 Of one—his name is out of me—the prize,
 If prize she were—(what marvel—she could see)—
 Thine, friend; and ever since my craven seeks

To wreck thee villainously: but, O Sir Knight,
 What dame or damsel have ye kneel'd to last?'

And Tristram, 'Last to my Queen Paramount,
 Here now to my Queen Paramount of love
 And loveliness—ay, lovelier than when first
 Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonesse,
 Sailing from Ireland.'

Softly laugh'd Isolt;
 'Flatter me not, for hath not our great Queen
 My dole of beauty trebled?' and he said,
 'Her beauty is her beauty, and thine thine,
 And thine is more to me—soft, gracious, kind—
 Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips
 Most gracious; but she, haughty, ev'n to him,
 Lancelot; for I have seen him wan enow
 To make one doubt if ever the great Queen
 Have yielded him her love.'

To whom Isolt,
 'Ah then, false hunter and false harper, thou
 Who brakest thro' the scruple of my bond,
 Calling me thy white hind, and saying to me
 That Guinevere had sinn'd against the highest,
 And I—misynok'd with such a want of man—
 That I could hardly sin against the lowest.'

He answer'd, 'O my soul, be comforted!
 If this be sweet, to sin in leading-strings,
 If here be comfort, and if ours be sin,
 Crown'd warrant had we for the crowning sin
 That made us happy: but how ye greet me—fear
 And fault and doubt—no word of that fond tale—

Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet memories
Of Tristram in that year he was away.'

And, saddening on the sudden, spake
Isolt,
'I had forgotten all in my strong joy
To see thee—yearnings?—ay! for, hour
by hour,
Here in the never-ended afternoon,
O sweeter than all memories of thee,
Deeper than any yearnings after thee
Seem'd those far-rolling, westward-
smiling seas,
Watch'd from this tower. Isolt of Britain
dash'd
Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,
Would that have chill'd her bride-kiss?
Wedded her?
Fought in her father's battles? wounded
there?
The King was all fulfill'd with grateful-
ness,
And she, my namesake of the hands, that
heal'd
Thy hurt and heart with unguent and
caress—
Well—can I wish her any huger wrong
Than having known thee? her too hast
thou left
To pine and waste in those sweet
memories.
O were I not my Mark's, by whom all
men
Are noble, I should hate thee more than
love.'

And Tristram, fondling her light hands,
replied,
'Grace, Queen, for being loved: she
loved me well.
Did I love her? the name at least I loved.
Isolt?—I fought his battles, for Isolt!
The night was dark; the true star set.
Isolt!
The name was ruler of the dark——Isolt?
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful,
meek,
Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to
God.'

And Isolt answer'd, 'Yea, and why
not I?
Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,
Pale-blooded, prayerful. Let me tell
thee now.
Here one black, mute midsummer night
I sat,
Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering
where,
Murmuring a light song I had heard thee
sing,
And once or twice I spake thy name aloud.
Then flash'd a levin-brand; and near me
stood,
In fuming sulphur blue and green, a
fiend—
Mark's way to steal behind one in the
dark—
For there was Mark: "He has wedded
her," he said,
Not said, but hiss'd it: then this crown
of towers
So shook to such a roar of all the sky,
That here in utter dark I swoon'd away,
And woke again in utter dark, and cried,
"I will flee hence and give myself to
God"—
And thou wert lying in thy new leman's
arms.'

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her
hand,
'May God be with thee, sweet, when old
and gray,
And past desire!' a saying that anger'd
her.
'"May God be with thee, sweet, when
thou art old,
And sweet no more to me!" I need
Him now.
For when had Lancelot utter'd aught so
gross
Ev'n to the swineherd's malkin in the
mast?
The greater man, the greater courtesy.
Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's
knight!
But thou, thro' ever harrying thy wild
beasts—
Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance

Becomes thee well—art grown wild beast
thyself.

How darest thou, if lover, push me even
In fancy from thy side, and set me far
In the gray distance, half a life away,
Her to be loved no more? Unsay it,
unswear!

Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,
Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,
Thy marriage and mine own, that I
should suck

Lies like sweet wines: lie to me: I believe.
Will ye not lie? not swear, as there ye
kneel,

And solemnly as when ye sware to him,
The man of men, our King—My God,
the power

Was once in vows when men believed the
King!

They lied not then, who sware, and thro'
their vows

The King prevailing made his realm:—
I say,

Swear to me thou wilt love me ev'n when
old,

Gray-hair'd, and past desire, and in de-
spair.'

Then Tristram, pacing moodily up and
down,

'Vows! did you keep the vow you made
to Mark

More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay,
but learnt,

The vow that binds too strictly snaps
itself—

My knighthood taught me this—ay, being
snapt—

We run more counter to the soul thereof
Than had we never sworn. I swear no
more.

I swore to the great King, and am for-
sworn.

For once—ev'n to the height—I honour'd
him.

"Man, is he man at all?" methought,
when first

I rode from our rough Lyonesse, and
beheld

That victor of the Pagan throned in hall—

His hair, a sun that ray'd from off a brow
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel-
blue eyes,

The golden beard that clothed his lips
with light—

Moreover, that weird legend of his birth,
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end
Amazed me; then, his foot was on a stool
Shaped as a dragon; he seem'd to me no
man,

But Michaël trampling Satan; so I sware,
Being amazed: but this went by—The
vows!

O ay—the wholesome madness of an
hour—

They served their use, their time; for
every knight

Believed himself a greater than himself,
And every follower eyed him as a God;
Till he, being lifted up beyond himself,
Did mightier deeds than elsewhere he had
done,

And so the realm was made; but then
their vows—

First mainly thro' that sullyng of our
Queen—

Began to gall the knighthood, asking
whence

Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?
Dropt down from heaven? wash'd up
from out the deep?

They fail'd to trace him thro' the flesh
and blood

Of our old kings: whence then? a doubt-
ful lord

To bind them by inviolable vows,
Which flesh and blood perforce would
violate:

For feel this arm of mine—the tide within
Red with free chase and heather-scented
air,

Pulsing full man; can Arthur make me
pure

As any maiden child? lock up my tongue
From uttering freely what I freely hear?
Bind me to one? The wide world
laughs at it.

And worldling of the world am I, and
know

The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour

Woos his own end; we are not angels here
 Nor shall be : vows—I am woodman of
 the woods,
 And hear the garnet-headed yaffingale
 Mock them : my soul, we love but while
 we may ;
 And therefore is my love so large for thee,
 Seeing it is not bounded save by love.'

Here ending, he moved toward her,
 and she said,
 ' Good : an I turn'd away my love for thee
 To some one thrice as courteous as thy-
 self—
 For courtesy wins woman all as well
 As valour may, but he that closes both
 Is perfect, he is Lancelot—taller indeed,
 Rosier and comelier, thou—but say I loved
 This knightliest of all knights, and cast
 thee back
 Thine own small saw, "We love but
 while we may,"
 Well then, what answer?'

He that while she spake,
 Mindful of what he brought to adorn her
 with,
 The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch
 The warm white apple of her throat,
 replied,
 ' Press this a little closer, sweet, until—
 Come, I am hunger'd and half-anger'd—
 meat,
 Wine, wine—and I will love thee to the
 death,
 And out beyond into the dream to come.'

So then, when both were brought to
 full accord,
 She rose, and set before him all he will'd ;
 And after these had comforted the blood
 With meats and wines, and satiated their
 hearts—
 Now talking of their woodland paradise,
 The deer, the dews, the fern, the founts,
 the lawns ;
 Now mocking at the much ungainliness,
 And craven shifts, and long crane legs of
 Mark—
 Then Tristram laughing caught the harp,
 and sang :

' Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bend
 the brier !

A star in heaven, a star within the mere !
 Ay, ay, O ay—a star was my desire,
 And one was far apart, and one was near :
 Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bow the
 grass !
 And one was water and one star was fire,
 And one will ever shine and one will pass.
 Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that move the
 mere.'

Then in the light's last glimmer Tris-
 tram show'd
 And swung the ruby carcanet. She cried,
 ' The collar of some Order, which our
 King
 Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,
 For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy
 peers.'

' Not so, my Queen,' he said, ' but the
 red fruit
 Grown on a magic oak-tree in mid-heaven,
 And won by Tristram as a tourney-prize,
 And hither brought by Tristram for his
 last
 Love-offering and peace-offering unto
 thee.'

He spoke, he turn'd, then, flinging
 round her neck,
 Claspt it, and cried ' Thine Order, O my
 Queen !'
 But, while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd
 throat,
 Out of the dark, just as the lips had
 touch'd,
 Behind him rose a shadow and a shriek—
 ' Mark's way,' said Mark, and clove him
 thro' the brain.

That night came Arthur home, and
 while he climb'd,
 All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping
 gloom,
 The stairway to the hall, and look'd and
 saw
 The great Queen's bower was dark,—
 about his feet
 A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,

'What art thou?' and the voice about his
feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy
fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again.'

GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court,
and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little
maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them
burn'd
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all
abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the
face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land
was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of
flight
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the
throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for
this
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tamper'd with the Lords of the
White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and
sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his
aims
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lance-
lot.

For thus it chanced one morn when
all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that
mock'd the may,
Had been, their wont, a-maying and
return'd,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,

Climb'd to the high top of the garden-
wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her
best
Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court
The williest and the worst; and more
than this
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couch'd, and as the
gardener's hand
Picks from the colewort a green cater-
pillar,
So from the high wall and the flowering
grove
Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the
heel,
And cast him as a worm upon the way;
But when he knew the Prince tho' marr'd
with dust,
He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these
Full knightly without scorn; for in those
days
No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in
scorn;
But, if a man were halt or hunch'd, in him
By those whom God had made full-limb'd
and tall,
Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,
And he was answer'd softly by the King
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot holp
To raise the Prince, who rising twice or
thrice
Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled,
and went:
But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she
laugh'd
Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who
cries
'I shudder, some one steps across my
grave';

Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed
 She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
 Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
 Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
 Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
 Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye:
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
 To help it from the death that cannot die,
 And save it even in extremes, began
 To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
 Beside the placid breathings of the King,
 In the dead night, grim faces came and went
 Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
 Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
 Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
 That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—
 Held her awake: or if she slept, she dream'd
 An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
 On some vast plain before a setting sun,
 And from the sun there swiftly made at her
 A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
 Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—
 When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
 And blackening, swallow'd all the land,
 and in it
 Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
 And all this trouble did not pass but grew;
 Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,
 And trustful courtesies of household life,
 Became her bane; and at the last she said,
 'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
 For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
 And if we meet again, some evil chance

Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
 Before the people, and our lord the King.
 And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,
 And still they met and met. Again she said,
 'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'
 And then they were agreed upon a night
 (When the good King should not be there)
 to meet
 And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.
 She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met
 And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye
 Low on the border of her couch they sat
 Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
 A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
 His creatures to the basement of the tower
 For testimony; and crying with full voice
 'Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,'
 aroused
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
 Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong,
 and he fell
 Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,
 And all was still: then she, 'The end is come,
 And I am shamed for ever'; and he said,
 'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,
 And fly to my strong castle overseas:
 There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,
 There hold thee with my life against the world.'
 She answer'd, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
 Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
 Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!
 Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
 Unwedded: yet rise now, and let us fly,
 For I will draw me into sanctuary,
 And bide my doom.' So Lancelot got her horse,

Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
And then they rode to the divided way,
There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for
he past,

Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
Back to his land; but she to Almesbury
Fled all night long by glimmering waste
and weald,

And heard the Spirits of the waste and
weald

Moan as she fled, or thought she heard
them moan:

And in herself she moan'd 'Too late, too
late!'

Till in the cold wind that foreruns the
morn,

A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,
Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a
field of death;

For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the
court,

Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land.'

And when she came to Almesbury she
spake

There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine
enemies

Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Her name to whom ye yield it, till her
time

To tell you': and her beauty, grace and
power,

Wrought as a charm upon them, and
they spared

To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the
nuns;

Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name,
nor sought,

Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for
shrift,

But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heed-
lessness

Which often lured her from herself; but
now,

This night, a rumour wildly blown about
Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the
realm,

And leagued him with the heathen, while
the King

Was waging war on Lancelot: then she
thought,

'With what a hate the people and the
King

Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon
her hands

Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd
No silence, brake it, uttering 'Late! so
late!

What hour, I wonder, now?' and when
she drew

No answer, by and by began to hum

An air the nuns had taught her; 'Late,
so late!'

Which when she heard, the Queen look'd
up, and said,

'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may
weep.'

Whereat full willingly sang the little
maid.

'Late, late, so late! and dark the
night and chill!

Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light had we: for that we do
repent;

And learning this, the bridegroom will
relent.

Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light: so late! and dark and chill
the night!

O let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is
so sweet?

O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.'

So sang the novice, while full passion-
ately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering

Her thought when first she came, wept
the sad Queen.

Then said the little novice prattling to her,

‘O pray you, noble lady, weep no
more ;

But let my words, the words of one so
small,

Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfort your sorrows ; for they do not
flow

From evil done ; right sure am I of that,
Who see your tender grace and stateliness.

But weigh your sorrows with our lord the
King’s,

And weighing find them less ; for gone is
he

To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot
there,

Round that strong castle where he holds
the Queen ;

And Modred whom he left in charge of
all,

The traitor—Ah sweet lady, the King’s
grief

For his own self, and his own Queen, and
realm,

Must needs be thrice as great as any of
ours.

For me, I thank the saints, I am not
great.

For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done.

None knows it, and my tears have brought
me good :

But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this
grief

Is added to the griefs the great must
bear,

That howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a
cloud :

As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked
Queen,

And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King, it could not be.’

Then to her own sad heart mutter’d the
Queen,

‘Will the child kill me with her innocent
talk ?’

But openly she answer’d, ‘Must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the
realm ?’

‘Yea,’ said the maid, ‘this is all
woman’s grief,

That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table
Round

Which good King Arthur founded, years
ago,

With signs and miracles and wonders,
there

At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.’

Then thought the Queen within herself
again,

‘Will the child kill me with her foolish
prate ?’

But openly she spake and said to her,
‘O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,

What canst thou know of Kings and
Tables Round,

Or what of signs and wonders, but the
signs

And simple miracles of thy nunnery ?’

To whom the little novice garrulously,
‘Yea, but I know : the land was full of
signs

And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.

So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table—at the founding of it ;

And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and
he said

That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused, and turn-
ing—there,

All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them—headland after headland
flame

Far on into the rich heart of the west :

And in the light the white mermaiden
 swam,
 And strong man-breasted things stood
 from the sea,
 And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the
 land,
 To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
 Made answer, sounding like a distant horn,
 So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
 Next morning, while he past the dim-lit
 woods,
 Himself beheld three spirits mad with
 joy
 Come dashing down on a tall wayside
 flower,
 That shook beneath them, as the thistle
 shakes
 When three gray linnets wrangle for the
 seed :
 And still at evenings on before his horse
 The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and
 broke
 Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and
 broke
 Flying, for all the land was full of life.
 And when at last he came to Camelot,
 A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
 Swung round the lighted lantern of the
 hall ;
 And in the hall itself was such a feast
 As never man had dream'd ; for every
 knight
 Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served
 By hands unseen ; and even as he said
 Down in the cellars merry bloated things
 Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the
 butts
 While the wine ran : so glad were spirits
 and men
 Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat
 bitterly,
 'Were they so glad? ill prophets were
 they all,
 Spirits and men : could none of them
 foresee,
 Not even thy wise father with his signs
 And wonders, what has fall'n upon the
 realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again,
 'Yea, one, a bard ; of whom my father
 said,
 Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
 Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
 Between the steep cliff and the coming
 wave ;
 And many a mystic lay of life and death
 Had chanted on the smoky mountain-
 tops,
 When round him bent the spirits of the
 hills
 With all their dewy hair blown back like
 flame :
 So said my father—and that night the bard
 Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang
 the King
 As wellnigh more than man, and rail'd at
 those
 Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois :
 For there was no man knew from whence
 he came ;
 But after tempest, when the long wave
 broke
 All down the thundering shores of Bude
 and Bos,
 There came a day as still as heaven, and
 then
 They found a naked child upon the sands
 Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea ;
 And that was Arthur ; and they foster'd
 him
 Till he by miracle was approven King :
 And that his grave should be a mystery
 From all men, like his birth ; and could
 he find
 A woman in her womanhood as great
 As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
 The twain together well might change the
 world.
 But even in the middle of his song
 He falter'd, and his hand fell from the
 harp,
 And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would
 have fall'n,
 But that they stay'd him up ; nor would
 he tell
 His vision ; but what doubt that he fore-
 saw
 This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?'

Then thought the Queen, 'Lo! they
have set her on,
Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me,' and bow'd her head
nor spake.
Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd
hands,
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
Said the good nuns would check her
gadding tongue
Full often, 'and, sweet lady, if I seem
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
Which my good father told me, check
me too
Nor let me shame my father's memory,
one
Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say
Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he
died,
Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers
back,
And left me; but of others who remain,
And of the two first-famed for courtesy—
And pray you check me if I ask amiss—
But pray you, which had noblest, while
you moved
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the
King?'

Then the pale Queen look'd up and
answer'd her,
'Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and the King
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and these
two
Were the most nobly-manner'd men of
all;
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'be manners such
fair fruit?
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thou-
sand-fold
Less noble, being, as all rumour runs,
The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

To which a mournful answer made the
Queen :
'O closed about by narrowing nunnery-
walls,
What knowest thou of the world, and all
its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the
woe?
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
Were for one hour less noble than himself,
Pray for him that he scape the doom of
fire,
And weep for her who drew him to his
doom.'

'Yea,' said the little novice, 'I pray for
both;
But I should all as soon believe that his,
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
As I could think, sweet lady, yours
would be
Such as they are, were you the sinful
Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
Whom she would soothe, and harm'd
where she would heal;
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who
cried,
'Such as thou art be never maiden more
For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague
And play upon, and harry me, petty spy
And traitress.' When that storm of anger
brake
From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
White as her veil, and stood before the
Queen
As tremulously as foam upon the beach
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
And when the Queen had added 'Get
thee hence,'
Fled frighted. Then that other left alone
Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,
Saying in herself, 'The simple, fearful
child
Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful
guilt,
Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.

For what is true repentance but in
thought—

Not ev'n in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant
to us :

And I have sworn never to see him more,
To see him more.'

And ev'n in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind
Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot
came,

Reputed the best knight and goodliest
man,

Ambassador, to lead her to his lord
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure, (for the
time

Was maytime, and as yet no sin was
dream'd,)

Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreking thro'
the earth,

And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before ; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they
saw

The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crown'd the state pavilion of the
King,

Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such
a trance,

And moving thro' the past unconsciously,
Came to that point where first she saw
the King

Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to
find

Her journey done, glanced at him, thought
him cold,

High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not
like him,

'Not like my Lancelot'—while she
brooded thus

And grew half-guilty in her thoughts
again,

There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery
ran,

Then on a sudden a cry, 'The King.'
She sat

Stiff-stricken, listening ; but when armed
feet

Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she
fell,

And grovell'd with her face against the
floor :

There with her milkwhite arms and
shadowy hair

She made her face a darkness from the
King :

And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her ; then came silence, then a
voice,

Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but tho' changed,
the King's :

'Liest thou here so low, the child of
one

I honour'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
Well is it that no child is born of thee.

The children born of thee are sword and
fire,

Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern
Sea ;

Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right
arm,

The mightiest of my knights, abode with
me,

Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.

And knowest thou now from whence I
come—from him,

From waging bitter war with him : and
he,

That did not shun to smite me in worse
way,

Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left

He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight: but many a
knight was slain;

And many more, and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred raised
revolt,

Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I
live,

To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my
death.

Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my
doom.

Thou hast not made my life so sweet to
me,

That I the King should greatly care to
live;

For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I
show,

Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast
sinn'd.

For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a
deed

Of prowess done redress'd a random
wrong.

But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and
all

The realms together under me, their
Head,

In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.

I made them lay their hands in mine and
swear

To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as
their King,

To break the heathen and uphold the
Christ,

To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable
words

And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a
man.

And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, "lo mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy."
Then came thy shameful sin with Lance-
lot;

Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest
knights,

And drawing foul ensample from fair
names,

Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
I guard as God's high gift from scathe
and wrong,

Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my
knights,

And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden days before thy sin.

For which of us, who might be left, could
speak

Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at
thee?

And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room
to room,

And I should evermore be vexed with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.

For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love
thy lord,

Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.

I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy
shame.

I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the
wife

Whom he knows false, abide and rule the
house :

For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the
crowd,

Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and
saps

The fealty of our friends, and stirs the
pulse

With devil's leaps, and poisons half the
young.

Worst of the worst were that man he that
reigns !

Better the King's waste hearth and aching
heart

Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their
bane.'

He paused, and in the pause she crept
an inch

Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.

Then waiting by the doors the warhorse
neigh'd

As at a friend's voice, and he spake again :

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy
crimes,

I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on
that fierce law,

The doom of treason and the flaming
death,

(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is
past.

The pang—which while I weigh'd thy
heart with one

Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in
part.

And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo ! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives : do thou for thine own soul the
rest.

But how to take last leave of all I loved ?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing ! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with
thee—

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's : nay, they never were the
King's.

I cannot take thy hand ; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd ; and
mine own flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
"I loathe thee" : yet not less, O Guine-
vere,

For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my
life

So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and
thou

Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine,
and know

I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me
that,

I charge thee, my last hope. Now must
I hence.

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet
blow :

They summon me their King to lead mine
hosts

Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they
call

My sister's son—no kin of mine, who
leagues

With Lords of the White Horse, heathen,
and knights,

Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet
myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious
doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the
event ;
But hither shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side ; see thee no more—
Farewell !'

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her
neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that
blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps
were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish
found
The casement : ' peradventure,' so she
thought,
' If I might see his face, and not be seen.'
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door !
And near him the sad nuns with each a
light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the
Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was
lower'd,
To which for crest the golden dragon
clung
Of Britain ; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she
saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the
lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of
fire.
And even then he turn'd ; and more and
more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him
gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and
cried aloud
' Oh Arthur !' there her voice brake
suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a
cliff
Falls in mid air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the
vale—
Went on in passionate utterance :

' Gone—my lord !
Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain !
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answer'd his
farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord
the King,
My own true lord ! how dare I call him
mine ?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution : he, the
King,
Call'd me polluted : shall I kill myself ?
What help in that ? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul ; nor can I kill my shame ;
No, nor by living can I live it down.
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks
to months,
The months will add themselves and make
the years,
The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be ; that is but of the world
What else? what hope? I think there was
a hope,
Except he mock'd me when he spake of
hope ;
His hope he call'd it ; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath for-
given
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down
sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God. Ah great and gentle
lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint

Among his warring senses, to thy
 knights—
 To whom my false voluptuous pride, that
 took
 Full easily all impressions from below,
 Would not look up, or half-despised the
 height
 To which I would not or I could not
 climb—
 I thought I could not breathe in that fine
 air
 That pure severity of perfect light—
 I yearn'd for warmth and colour which I
 found
 In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou
 art,
 Thou art the highest and most human
 too,
 Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there
 none
 Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
 Now—ere he goes to the great Battle?
 none :
 Myself must tell him in that purer life,
 But now it were too daring. Ah my
 God,
 What might I not have made of thy fair
 world,
 Had I but loved thy highest creature
 here?
 It was my duty to have loved the highest :
 It surely was my profit had I known :
 It would have been my pleasure had I
 seen.
 We needs must love the highest when we
 see it,
 Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand
 Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes : she
 look'd and saw
 The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said
 to her,
 'Yea, little maid, for am I not forgiven?'
 Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
 All round her, weeping ; and her heart
 was loosed
 Within her, and she wept with these and
 said,

'Ye know me then, that wicked one,
 who broke
 The vast design and purpose of the King.
 O shut me round with narrowing nunnery-
 walls,
 Meek maidens, from the voices crying
 "shame."
 I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.
 Let no one dream but that he loves me
 still.
 So let me, if you do not shudder at me,
 Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with
 you ;
 Wear black and white, and be a nun like
 you,
 Fast with your fasts, not feasting with
 your feasts ;
 Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at
 your joys,
 But not rejoicing ; mingle with your rites ;
 Pray and be pray'd for ; lie before your
 shrines ;
 Do each low office of your holy house ;
 Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
 To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
 Who ransom'd us, and haler too than I ;
 And treat their loathsome hurts and heal
 mine own ;
 And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer
 The sombre close of that voluptuous day,
 Which wrought the ruin of my lord the
 King.'

She said : they took her to themselves :
 and she
 Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late?'
 Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess
 died.
 Then she, for her good deeds and her
 pure life,
 And for the power of ministration in her,
 And likewise for the high rank she had
 borne,
 Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess,
 lived
 For three brief years, and there, an
 Abbess, past
 To where beyond these voices there is
 peace.

End of 'The Round Table.'

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the
knights,
Told, when the man was no more than
a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other
minds.

For on their march to westward,
Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering
host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the
King :

‘I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark’d Him in the flowering of His
fields,

But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me ! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and
dim,

And have not power to see it as it is :
Perchance, because we see not to the
close ;—

For I, being simple, thought to work His
will,

And have but stricken with the sword in
vain ;

And all whereon I lean’d in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my
death :

Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall
not die.’

Then, ere that last weird battle in the
west,
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain
kill’d

In Lancelot’s war, the ghost of Gawain
blown

Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling, ‘Hollow, hollow all
delight !

Hail, King ! to-morrow thou shalt pass
away.

Farewell ! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering
wind,

And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight.’
And fainter onward, like wild birds that
change

Their season in the night and wail their
way

From cloud to cloud, down the long wind
the dream

Shrill’d ; but in going mingled with dim
cries

Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sack’d by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with
wail

Pass to new lords ; and Arthur woke and
call’d,

‘Who spake ? A dream. O light upon
the wind,

Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these
dim cries

Thine ? or doth all that haunts the waste
and wild

Mourn, knowing it will go along with me ?’

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and
spake :

‘O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the
field ;

But in their stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever : but as yet thou shalt not pass.
Light was Gawain in life, and light in
death

Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man ;
And care not thou for dreams from him,
but rise—

I hear the steps of Modred in the west,

And with him many of thy people, and
 knights
 Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but
 grosser grown
 Than heathen, spitting at their vows and
 thee.
 Right well in heart they know thee for
 the King.
 Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :

'Far other is this battle in the west
 Whereto we move, than when we strove
 in youth,
 And brake the petty kings, and fought
 with Rome,
 Or thrust the heathen from the Roman
 wall,
 And shook him thro' the north. Ill doom
 is mine
 To war against my people and my knights.
 The king who fights his people fights
 himself.
 And they my knights, who loved me once,
 the stroke
 That strikes them dead is as my death to
 me.
 Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
 Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I
 saw
 One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
 Hath folded in the passes of the world.'

Then rose the King and moved his host
 by night,
 And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by
 league,
 Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—
 A land of old upheaven from the abyss
 By fire, to sink into the abyss again ;
 Where fragments of forgotten peoples
 dwelt,
 And the long mountains ended in a coast
 Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
 The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
 There the pursuer could pursue no more,
 And he that fled no further fly the King ;
 And there, that day when the great light
 of heaven

Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
 On the waste sand by the waste sea they
 closed.

Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
 Like this last, dim, weird battle of the
 west.

A deathwhite mist slept over sand and
 sea :

Whereof the chill, to him who breathed
 it, drew

Down with his blood, till all his heart was
 cold

With formless fear ; and ev'n on Arthur
 fell

Confusion, since he saw not whom he
 fought.

For friend and foe were shadows in the
 mist,

And friend slew friend not knowing whom
 he slew ;

And some had visions out of golden
 youth,

And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
 Look in upon the battle ; and in the mist
 Was many a noble deed, many a base,
 And chance and craft and strength in
 single fights,

And ever and anon with host to host
 Shocks, and the splintering spear, the
 hard mail hewn,

Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands,
 the crash

Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and
 shrieks

After the Christ, of those who falling down
 Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the
 mist ;

And shouts of heathen and the traitor
 knights,

Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blas-
 phemies,

Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of
 the lungs

In that close mist, and cryings for the
 light,

Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after
 wail

Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death

Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,

Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell ; but when the dolorous day

Grew drearier toward twilight falling,
came

A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew

The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field

Of battle : but no man was moving there ;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen ; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down

Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,

And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,

And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,

And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King :

‘Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,

And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,

And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho’ they had not died for me ?—

O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall’n
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King.
Behold, I seem but King among the dead.’

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere :
‘My King,

King everywhere ! and so the dead have kings,

There also will I worship thee as King.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee ; but who hates thee, he
that brought

The heathen back among us, yonder stands,

Modred, unharm’d, the traitor of thine house.’

Then spake the King : ‘My house hath been my doom.

But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.

My house are rather they who sware my vows,

Yea, even while they brake them, own’d me King.

And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath fail’d,

That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.

King am I, whatsoever be their cry ;
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see

Yet, ere I pass.’ And uttering this the King

Made at the man : then Modred smote his liege

Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword

Had beaten thin ; while Arthur at one blow,

Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll’d
Among the mountains by the winter sea ;
Until King Arthur’s Table, man by man,
Had fall’n in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,

The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land :
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :

‘The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights

Whereof this world holds record. Such
a sleep

They sleep—the men I loved. I think
that we

Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly
deeds,

Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.

I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come
again

To rule once more ; but, let what will be,
be,

I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou remem-
berest how

In those old days, one summer noon, an
arm

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
derful,

Holding the sword—and how I row'd
across

And took it, and have worn it, like a king ;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told

In aftertime, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring
me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee
thus,

Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the
helm—

A little thing may harm a wounded man ;
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee
word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he
stept,

And in the moon athwart the place of
tombs,

Where lay the mighty bones of ancient
men,

Old knights, and over them the sea-wind
sang

Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He,
stepping down

By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excali-
bur,

And o'er him, drawing it, the winter
moon,

Brightening the skirts of a long cloud,
ran forth

And sparkled keen with frost against the
hilt :

For all the haft twinkled with diamond
sparks,

Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlety jewellery. He gazed so long

That both his eyes were dazzled as he
stood,

This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at the last it seem'd

Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,

That whistled stiff and dry about the
marge.

So strode he back slow to the wounded
King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
vere :

'Hast thou perform'd my mission which
I gave?

What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-
vere :

'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint
and pale :

'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy
name,

Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight :

For surer sign had follow'd, either hand
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.

This is a shameful thing for men to lie.

Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me
word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the
mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in
thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he
smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the
earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of
many men.
What good should follow this, if this were
done?
What harm, undone? Deep harm to
disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king
demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what
he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? But were this
kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty
kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excali-
bur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the
Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the
deep
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the after-
time
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame
were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own
conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded
King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing
heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-
vere:
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much
in wrath:
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what
thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious
hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee
hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and
ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly,
plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd
the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The
great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the
moon,
And flashing round and round, and
whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter
shock

By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
 And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing
 thicker breath :
 ' Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
 Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or
 seen ? '

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
 ' Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the
 gems
 Should blind my purpose, for I never
 saw,
 Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
 So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
 Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-
 ing him ;
 But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder-
 ful,
 That caught him by the hilt, and
 brandish'd him
 Three times, and drew him under in the
 mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breath-
 ing hard :
 ' My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I
 were gone.
 Make broad thy shoulders to receive my
 weight,
 And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall
 die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half
 rose,
 Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
 As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere

Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
 And would have spoken, but he found
 not words ;
 Then took with care, and kneeling on
 one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid
 hands,
 And rising bore him thro' the place of
 tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted
 hard,
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute. So sigh'd
 the King,
 Muttering and murmuring at his ear,
 ' Quick, quick !
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
 But the other swiftly strode from ridge to
 ridge,
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as
 he walk'd,
 Larger than human on the frozen hills.
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
 Before. His own thought drove him like
 a goad.
 Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and
 right
 The bare black cliff clang'd round him,
 as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed
 heels—
 And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
 And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky
 barge,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them ; and descending they were
 ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately
 forms,
 Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream
 —by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold : and
 from them rose
 A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
 And, as it were one voice, an agony

Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one
comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the
world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in
the barge.'

So to the barge they came. There those
three Queens

Put forth their hands, and took the King,
and wept.

But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and
chafed his hands,

And call'd him by his name, complaining
loud,

And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood : for all his face
was white

And colourless, and like the wither'd
moon

Smote by the fresh beam of the spring-
ing east ;

And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with
drops

Of onset ; and the light and lustrous
curls—

That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd
with dust ;

Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that
fringed his lips.

So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in
rest,

From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and
charged

Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir
Bedivere :

'Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my
eyes?

For now I see the true old times are
dead,

When every morning brought a noble
chance,

And every chance brought out a noble
knight.

Such times have been not since the light
that led

The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dis-
solved

Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the
years,

Among new men, strange faces, other
minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the
barge :

'The old order changeth, yielding place
to new,

And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the
world.

Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I
have done

May He within himself make pure ! but
thou,

If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are
wrought by prayer

Than this world dreams of. Wherefore,
let thy voice

Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of
prayer

Both for themselves and those who call
them friend ?

For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God.

But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a
doubt)—

To the island-valley of Avilion ;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies

Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard
lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer
sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous
wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and
sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-
breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes
the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir
Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of
dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for ever-
more,
The stillness of the dead world's winter
dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King
is gone.'
And therewithal came on him the weird
rhyme,
'From the great deep to the great deep
he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly
clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron
crag ;

Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet,
and cried,
'He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again ; but—if he come no
more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black
boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three
whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with
living light,
They stood before his throne in silence,
friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his
need?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there
came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about,
and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and
saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare
the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new
year.

TO THE QUEEN

O LOYAL to the royal in thyself,
And loyal to thy land, as this to thee—
Bear witness, that rememberable day,
When, pale as yet, and fever-worn, the
Prince
Who scarce had pluck'd his flickering life
again
From halfway down the shadow of the
grave,
Past with thee thro' thy people and their
love,

And London roll'd one tide of joy thro'
all
Her trebled millions, and loud leagues of
man
And welcome ! witness, too, the silent cry,
The prayer of many a race and creed,
and clime—
Thunderless lightnings striking under sea
From sunset and sunrise of all thy realm,
And that true North, whereof we lately
heard

A strain to shame us 'keep you to your-
 selves ;
 So loyal is too costly ! friends—your love
 Is but a burthen : loose the bond, and go.'
 Is this the tone of empire ? here the faith
 That made us lovers ? this, indeed, her
 voice
 And meaning, whom the roar of Hougou-
 mont
 Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven ?
 What shock has fool'd her since, that she
 should speak
 So feebly ? wealthier—wealthier—hour
 by hour !
 The voice of Britain, or a sinking land,
 Some third-rate isle half-lost among her
 seas ?
There rang her voice, when the full city
 peal'd
 Thee and thy Prince ! The loyal to their
 crown
 Are loyal to their own far sons, who love
 Our ocean-empire with her boundless
 homes
 For ever-broadening England, and her
 throne
 In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle,
 That knows not her own greatness : if
 she knows
 And dreads it we are fall'n.—But thou,
 my Queen,
 Not for itself, but thro' thy living love
 For one to whom I made it o'er his grave
 Sacred, accept this old imperfect tale,
 New-old, and shadowing Sense at war
 with Soul,
 Ideal manhood closed in real man,
 Rather than that gray king, whose name,
 a ghost,
 Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from
 mountain peak,
 And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still ;
 or him

Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's,
 one
 Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time
 That hover'd between war and wanton-
 ness,
 And crownings and dethronements : take
 withal
 Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that
 Heaven
 Will blow the tempest in the distance back
 From thine and ours : for some are scared,
 who mark,
 Or wisely or unwisely, signs of storm,
 Waverings of every vane with every wind,
 And wordy trucklings to the transient
 hour,
 And fierce or careless looseners of the
 faith,
 And Softness breeding scorn of simple
 life,
 Or Cowardice, the child of lust for gold,
 Or Labour, with a groan and not a voice,
 Or Art with poisonous honey stol'n from
 France,
 And that which knows, but careful for
 itself,
 And that which knows not, ruling that
 which knows
 To its own harm : the goal of this great
 world
 Lies beyond sight : yet—if our slowly-
 grown
 And crown'd Republic's crowning com-
 mon-sense,
 That saved her many times, not fail—
 their fears
 Are morning shadows huger than the
 shapes
 That cast them, not those gloomier which
 forego
 The darkness of that battle in the West,
 Where all of high and holy dies away.

THE LOVER'S TALE

THE original Preface to 'The Lover's Tale' states that it was composed in my nineteenth year. Two only of the three parts then written were printed, when, feeling the imperfection of the poem, I withdrew it from the press. One of my friends however who, boylike, admired the boy's work, distributed among our common associates of that hour some copies of these two parts, without my knowledge, without the omissions and amendments which I had in contemplation, and marred by the many misprints of the compositor. Seeing that these two parts have of late been mercilessly pirated, and that what I had deemed scarce worthy to live is not allowed to die, may I not be pardoned if I suffer the whole poem at last to come into the light—accompanied with a reprint of the sequel—a work of my mature life—'The Golden Supper'?

May, 1879.

ARGUMENT

JULIAN, whose cousin and foster-sister, Camilla, has been wedded to his friend and rival, Lionel, endeavours to narrate the story of his own love for her, and the strange sequel. He speaks (in Parts II. and III.) of having been haunted by visions and the sound of bells, tolling for a funeral, and at last ringing for a marriage; but he breaks away, overcome, as he approaches the Event, and a witness to it completes the tale.

I

HERE far away, seen from the topmost cliff,

Filling with purple gloom the vacancies
Between the tufted hills, the sloping seas
Hung in mid-heaven, and half-way down
rare sails,

White as white clouds, floated from sky
to sky.

Oh! pleasant breast of waters, quiet bay,
Like to a quiet mind in the loud world,
Where the chafed breakers of the outer
sea

Sank powerless, as anger falls aside
And withers on the breast of peaceful love;
Thou didst receive the growth of pines
that fledged

The hills that watch'd thee, as Love
watcheth Love,

In thine own essence, and delight thyself
To make it wholly thine on sunny days.
Keep thou thy name of 'Lover's Bay.'

See, sirs,

Even now the Goddess of the Past, that
takes

The heart, and sometimes touches but
one string

That quivers, and is silent, and sometimes
Sweeps suddenly all its half-moulder'd
chords

To some old melody, begins to play

That air which pleased her first. I feel
thy breath;

I come, great Mistress of the ear and eye:
Thy breath is of the pinewood; and tho'
years

Have hollow'd out a deep and stormy
strait

Betwixt the native land of Love and me,
Breathe but a little on me, and the sail
Will draw me to the rising of the sun,
The lucid chambers of the morning star,
And East of Life.

Permit me, friend, I prythee,
To pass my hand across my brows, and
muse

On those dear hills, that never more will
meet

The sight that throbs and aches beneath
my touch,

As tho' there beat a heart in either eye;
For when the outer lights are darken'd
thus,

The memory's vision hath a keener edge.
It grows upon me now—the semicircle
Of dark-blue waters and the narrow fringe
Of curving beach—its wreaths of dripping
green—

Its pale pink shells—the summerhouse
aloft

That open'd on the pines with doors of
glass,

A mountain nest—the pleasure-boat that
 rock'd,
 Light-green with its own shadow, keel to
 keel,
 Upon the dappled dimplings of the wave,
 That blanch'd upon its side.

O Love, O Hope !

They come, they crowd upon me all at
 once—

Moved from the cloud of forgotten
 things,

That sometimes on the horizon of the
 mind

Lies folded, often sweeps athwart in
 storm—

Flash upon flash they lighten thro' me—
 days

Of dewy dawning and the amber eves
 When thou and I, Camilla, thou and I
 Were borne about the bay or safely
 moor'd

Beneath a low-brow'd cavern, where the
 tide

Plash'd, sapping its worn ribs ; and all
 without

The slowly-ridging rollers on the cliffs
 Clash'd, calling to each other, and thro'
 the arch

Down those loud waters, like a setting
 star,

Mixt with the gorgeous west the light-
 house shone,

And silver-smiling Venus ere she fell

Would often loiter in her balmy blue,

To crown it with herself.

Here, too, my love

Waver'd at anchor with me, when day
 hung

From his mid-dome in Heaven's airy
 halls ;

Gleams of the water-circles as they broke,
 Flicker'd like doubtful smiles about her
 lips,

Quiver'd a flying glory on her hair,
 Leapt like a passing thought across her
 eyes ;

And mine with one that will not pass,
 till earth

And heaven pass too, dwelt on my heaven,
 a face

Most starry-fair, but kindled from within
 As 'twere with dawn. She was dark-
 hair'd, dark-eyed :

Oh, such dark eyes ! a single glance of
 them

Will govern a whole life from birth to
 death,

Careless of all things else, led on with light
 In trances and in visions : look at them,
 You lose yourself in utter ignorance ;

You cannot find their depth ; for they go
 back,

And farther back, and still withdraw
 themselves

Quite into the deep soul, that evermore
 Fresh springing from her fountains in the
 brain,

Still pouring thro', floods with redundant
 life

Her narrow portals.

Trust me, long ago

I should have died, if it were possible
 To die in gazing on that perfectness
 Which I do bear within me : I had died,
 But from my farthest lapse, my latest ebb,
 Thine image, like a charm of light and
 strength

Upon the waters, push'd me back again
 On these deserted sands of barren life.
 Tho' from the deep vault where the heart
 of Hope

Fell into dust, and crumbled in the dark—
 Forgetting how to render beautiful
 Her countenance with quick and health-
 ful blood—

Thou didst not sway me upward ; could
 I perish

While thou, a meteor of the sepulchre,
 Didst swathe thyself all round Hope's
 quiet urn

For ever ? He, that saith it, hath o'er-
 stept

The slippery footing of his narrow wit,
 And fall'n away from judgment. Thou
 art light,

To which my spirit leaneth all her flowers,
 And length of days, and immortality

Of thought, and freshness ever self-re-
 new'd.
 For Time and Grief abode too long with
 Life,
 And, like all other friends i' the world, at
 last
 They grew weary of her fellowship :
 So Time and Grief did beckon unto
 Death,
 And Death drew nigh and beat the doors
 of Life ;
 But thou didst sit alone in the inner house,
 A wakeful portress, and didst parle with
 Death,—
 'This is a charmed dwelling which I
 hold' ;
 So Death gave back, and would no
 further come.
 Yet is my life nor in the present time,
 Nor in the present place. To me alone,
 Push'd from his chair of regal heritage,
 The Present is the vassal of the Past :
 So that, in that I *have* lived, do I live,
 And cannot die, and am, in having been—
 A portion of the pleasant yesterday,
 Thrust forward on to-day and out of
 place ;
 A body journeying onward, sick with
 toil,
 The weight as if of age upon my limbs,
 The grasp of hopeless grief about my
 heart,
 And all the senses weaken'd, save in that,
 Which long ago they had glean'd and
 garner'd up
 Into the granaries of memory—
 The clear brow, bulwark of the precious
 brain,
 Chink'd as you see, and seam'd—and all
 the while
 The light soul twines and mingles with
 the growths
 Of vigorous early days, attracted, won,
 Married, made one with, molten into all
 The beautiful in Past of act or place,
 And like the all-enduring camel, driven
 Far from the diamond fountain by the
 palms,
 Who toils across the middle moonlit
 nights,

Or when the white heats of the blinding
 noons
 Beat from the concave sand ; yet in him
 keeps
 A draught of that sweet fountain that he
 loves,
 To stay his feet from falling, and his spirit
 From bitterness of death.

Ye ask me, friends,
 When I began to love. How should I
 tell you ?
 Or from the after-fulness of my heart,
 Flow back again unto my slender spring
 And first of love, tho' every turn and
 depth
 Between is clearer in my life than all
 Its present flow. Ye know not what ye
 ask.
 How should the broad and open flower
 tell
 What sort of bud it was, when, prest
 together
 In its green sheath, close-lapt in silken
 folds,
 It seem'd to keep its sweetness to itself,
 Yet was not the less sweet for that it
 seem'd ?
 For young Life knows not when young
 Life was born,
 But takes it all for granted : neither Love,
 Warm in the heart, his cradle, can re-
 member
 Love in the womb, but resteth satisfied,
 Looking on her that brought him to the
 light :
 Or as men know not when they fall asleep
 Into delicious dreams, our other life,
 So know I not when I began to love.
 This is my sum of knowledge—that my
 love
 Grew with myself—say rather, was my
 growth,
 My inward sap, the hold I have on earth,
 My outward circling air wherewith I
 breathe,
 Which yet upholds my life, and evermore
 Is to me daily life and daily death :
 For how should I have lived and not
 have loved ?

Can ye take off the sweetness from the
flower,
The colour and the sweetness from the
rose,
And place them by themselves ; or set
apart
Their motions and their brightness from
the stars,
And then point out the flower or the star?
Or build a wall betwixt my life and love,
And tell me where I am? 'Tis even
thus :
In that I live I love ; because I love
I live : whate'er is fountain to the one
Is fountain to the other ; and whene'er
Our God unknits the riddle of the one,
There is no shade or fold of mystery
Swathing the other.

Many, many years,
(For they seem many and my most of life,
And well I could have linger'd in that
porch,
So unproportion'd to the dwelling-place,)
In the Maydews of childhood, opposite
The flush and dawn of youth, we lived
together,
Apart, alone together on those hills.

Before he saw my day my father died,
And he was happy that he saw it not ;
But I and the first daisy on his grave
From the same clay came into light at
once.

As Love and I do number equal years,
So she, my love, is of an age with me.
How like each other was the birth of
each !

On the same morning, almost the same
hour,
Under the selfsame aspect of the stars,
(Oh falsehood of all starcraft !) we were
born.

How like each other was the birth of each !
The sister of my mother—she that bore
Camilla close beneath her beating heart,
Which to the imprison'd spirit of the child,
With its true-touched pulses in the flow
And hourly visitation of the blood,
Sent notes of preparation manifold,

And mellow'd echoes of the outer world—
My mother's sister, mother of my love,
Who had a twofold claim upon my heart,
One twofold mightier than the other was,
In giving so much beauty to the world,
And so much wealth as God had charged
her with—

Loathing to put it from herself for ever,
Left her own life with it ; and dying thus,
Crown'd with her highest act the placid
face
And breathless body of her good deeds
past.

So were we born, so orphan'd. She
was motherless
And I without a father. So from each
Of those two pillars which from earth
uphold
Our childhood, one had fallen away, and
all
The careful burthen of our tender years
Trembled upon the other. He that gave
Her life, to me delightedly fulfill'd
All lovingkindnesses, all offices
Of watchful care and trembling tender-
ness.

He waked for both : he pray'd for both :
he slept
Dreaming of both : nor was his love the
less

Because it was divided, and shot forth
Boughs on each side, laden with whole-
some shade,

Wherein we nested sleeping or awake,
And sang aloud the matin-song of life.

She was my foster-sister : on one arm
The flaxen ringlets of our infancies
Wander'd, the while we rested : one soft
lap
Pillow'd us both : a common light of eyes
Was on us as we lay : our baby lips,
Kissing one bosom, ever drew from thence
The stream of life, one stream, one life,
one blood,
One sustenance, which, still as thought
grew large,
Still larger moulding all the house of
thought,

Made all our tastes and fancies like,
perhaps—

All—all but one ; and strange to me,
and sweet,

Sweet thro' strange years to know that
whatsoever

Our general mother meant for me alone,
Our mutual mother dealt to both of us :

So what was earliest mine in earliest life,
I shared with her in whom myself remains.

As was our childhood, so our infancy,

They tell me, was a very miracle

Of fellow-feeling and communion.

They tell me that we would not be alone,—

We cried when we were parted ; when I
wept,

Her smile lit up the rainbow on my tears,
Stay'd on the cloud of sorrow ; that we

loved

The sound of one-another's voices more
Than the gray cuckoo loves his name, and
learn'd

To lisp in tune together ; that we slept
In the same cradle always, face to face.

Heart beating time to heart, lip pressing
lip,

Folding each other, breathing on each
other,

Dreaming together (dreaming of each
other

They should have added), till the morning
light

Sloped thro' the pines, upon the dewy
pane

Falling, unseal'd our eyelids, and we woke
To gaze upon each other. If this be

true,

At thought of which my whole soul
languishes

And faints, and hath no pulse, no breath
—as tho'

A man in some still garden should infuse
Rich atar in the bosom of the rose,

Till, drunk with its own wine, and over-
full

Of sweetness, and in smelling of itself,
It falls on its own thorns—if this be true—

And that way my wish leads me evermore
Still to believe it—'tis so sweet a thought,

Why in the utter stillness of the soul

Doth question'd memory answer not, nor
tell

Of this our earliest, our closest-drawn,
Most loveliest, earthly-heavenliest har-
mony ?

O blossom'd portal of the lonely house
Green prelude, April promise, glad new
year

Of Being, which with earliest violets
And lavish carol of clear-throated larks

Fill'd all the March of life !—I will not
speak of thee,

These have not seen thee, these can never
know thee,

They cannot understand me. Pass we
then

A term of eighteen years. Ye would but
laugh,

If I should tell you how I hoard in
thought

The faded rhymes and scraps of ancient
crones,

Gray relics of the nurseries of the world,
Which are as gems set in my memory,

Because she learnt them with me ; or
what use

To know her father left us just before
The daffodil was blown ? or how we

found

The dead man cast upon the shore ? All
this

Seems to the quiet daylight of your minds
But cloud and smoke, and in the dark of

mine

Is traced with flame. Move with me to
the event.

There came a glorious morning, such a
one

As dawns but once a season. Mercury
On such a morning would have flung

himself

From cloud to cloud, and swum with
balanced wings

To some tall mountain : when I said to
her,

'A day for Gods to stoop,' she answered,
'Ay,

And men to soar': for as that other
gazed,

Shading his eyes till all the fiery cloud,

The prophet and the chariot and the
 steeds,
 Suck'd into oneness like a little star
 Were drunk into the inmost blue, we
 stood,
 When first we came from out the pines at
 noon,
 With hands for eaves, uplooking and
 almost
 Waiting to see some blessed shape in
 heaven,
 So bathed we were in brilliance. Never
 yet
 Before or after have I known the spring
 Pour with such sudden deluges of light
 Into the middle summer ; for that day
 Love, rising, shook his wings, and charged
 the winds
 With spiced May-sweets from bound to
 bound, and blew
 Fresh fire into the sun, and from within
 Burst thro' the heated buds, and sent his
 soul
 Into the songs of birds, and touch'd far-
 off
 His mountain-altars, his high hills, with
 flame
 Milder and purer.

Thro' the rocks we wound :
 The great pine shook with lonely sounds
 of joy
 That came on the sea-wind. As moun-
 tain streams
 Our bloods ran free : the sunshine seem'd
 to brood
 More warmly on the heart than on the
 brow.
 We often paused, and, looking back, we
 saw
 The clefts and openings in the mountains
 fill'd
 With the blue valley and the glistening
 brooks,
 And all the low dark groves, a land of
 love !
 A land of promise, a land of memory,
 A land of promise flowing with the milk
 And honey of delicious memories !

And down to sea, and far as eye could
 ken,
 Each way from verge to verge a Holy
 Land,
 Still growing holier as you near'd the
 bay,
 For there the Temple stood.

When we had reach'd
 The grassy platform on some hill, I
 stoop'd,
 I gather'd the wild herbs, and for her
 brows
 And mine made garlands of the selfsame
 flower,
 Which she took smiling, and with my
 work thus
 Crown'd her clear forehead. Once or
 twice she told me
 (For I remember all things) to let grow
 The flowers that run poison in their veins.
 She said, ' The evil flourish in the world.'
 Then playfully she gave herself the lie—
 ' Nothing in nature is unbeautiful ;
 So, brother, pluck and spare not.' So
 I wove
 Ev'n the dull-blooded poppy-stem, ' whose
 flower,
 Hued with the scarlet of a fierce sunrise,
 Like to the wild youth of an evil prince,
 Is without sweetness, but who crowns
 himself
 Above the naked poisons of his heart
 In his old age.' A graceful thought of
 hers
 Grav'n on my fancy ! And oh, how like
 a nymph,
 A stately mountain nymph she look'd !
 how native
 Unto the hills she trod on ! While I
 gazed
 My coronal slowly disentrined itself
 And fell between us both ; tho' while I
 gazed
 My spirit leap'd as with those thrills of
 bliss
 That strike across the soul in prayer, and
 show us
 That we are surely heard. Methought a
 light

Burst from the garland I had wov'n, and
stood

A solid glory on her bright black hair ;
A light methought broke from her dark,
dark eyes,

And shot itself into the singing winds ;
A mystic light flash'd ev'n from her white
robe

As from a glass in the sun, and fell about
My footsteps on the mountains.

Last we came

To what our people call 'The Hill of
Woe.'

A bridge is there, that, look'd at from
beneath

Seems but a cobweb filament to link
The yawning of an earthquake-cloven
chasm.

And thence one night, when all the winds
were loud,

A woful man (for so the story went)
Had thrust his wife and child and dash'd
himself

Into the dizzy depth below. Below,
Fierce in the strength of far descent, a
stream

Flies with a shatter'd foam along the
chasm.

The path was perilous, loosely strown
with crags :

We mounted slowly ; yet to both there
came

The joy of life in steepness overcome,
And victories of ascent, and looking down
On all that had look'd down on us ; and
joy

In breathing nearer heaven ; and joy to
me,

High over all the azure-circled earth,
To breathe with her as if in heaven itself ;
And more than joy that I to her became
Her guardian and her angel, raising her
Still higher, past all peril, until she saw
Beneath her feet the region far away,
Beyond the nearest mountain's bosky
brows,

Arise in open prospect—heath and hill,
And hollow lined and wooded to the lips,
And steep-down walls of battlemented rock

Gilded with broom, or shatter'd into
spires,

And glory of broad waters interfused,
Whence rose as it were breath and steam
of gold,

And over all the great wood rioting
And climbing, streak'd or starr'd at
intervals

With falling brook or blossom'd bush—
and last,

Framing the mighty landscape to the west,
A purple range of mountain-cones, be-
tween

Whose interspaces gush'd in blinding
bursts

The incorporate blaze of sun and sea.

At length

Descending from the point and standing
both,

There on the tremulous bridge, that from
beneath

Had seem'd a gossamer filament up in air,
We paused amid the splendour. All the
west

And ev'n unto the middle south was
ribb'd

And barr'd with bloom on bloom. The
sun below,

Held for a space 'twixt cloud and wave,
shower'd down

Rays of a mighty circle, weaving over
That various wilderness a tissue of light
Unparallel'd. On the other side, the
moon,

Half-melted into thin blue air, stood still,
And pale and fibrous as a wither'd leaf,
Nor yet endured in presence of His eyes

To indue his lustre ; most unloverlike,
Since in his absence full of light and joy,
And giving light to others. But this
most,

Next to her presence whom I loved so
well,

Spoke loudly even into my inmost heart.
As to my outward hearing : the loud
stream,

Forth issuing from his portals in the crag
(A visible link unto the home of my
heart),

Ran amber toward the west, and nigh
the sea
Parting my own loved mountains was
received,
Shorn of its strength, into the sympathy
Of that small bay, which out to open
main
Glow'd intermingling close beneath the
sun.
Spirit of Love ! that little hour was bound
Shut in from Time, and dedicate to
thee :
Thy fires from heaven had touch'd it,
and the earth
They fell on became hallow'd evermore.

We turn'd : our eyes met : hers were
bright, and mine
Were dim with floating tears, that shot
the sunset
In lightnings round me ; and my name
was borne
Upon her breath. Henceforth my name
has been
A hallow'd memory like the names of old,
A center'd, glory-circled memory,
And a peculiar treasure, brooking not
Exchange or currency : and in that hour
A hope flow'd round me, like a golden
mist
Charm'd amid eddies of melodious airs,
A moment, ere the onward whirlwind
shatter it,
Waver'd and floated—which was less
than Hope,
Because it lack'd the power of perfect
Hope ;
But which was more and higher than all
Hope,
Because all other Hope had lower aim ;
Even that this name to which her gracious
lips
Did lend such gentle utterance, this one
name,
In some obscure hereafter, might in-
wreath
(How lovelier, nobler then !) her life, her
love,
With my life, love, soul, spirit, and heart
and strength.

'Brother,' she said, 'let this be call'd
henceforth
The Hill of Hope'; and I replied, 'O
sister,
My will is one with thine ; the Hill of
Hope.'
Nevertheless, we did not change the name.

I did not speak : I could not speak my
love.
Love lieth deep : Love dwells not in lip-
depths.
Love wraps his wings on either side the
heart,
Constraining it with kisses close and warm,
Absorbing all the incense of sweet thoughts
So that they pass not to the shrine of
sound.
Else had the life of that delighted hour
Drunk in the largeness of the utterance
Of Love ; but how should Earthly mea-
sure mete
The Heavenly-unmeasured or unlimited
Love,
Who scarce can tune his high majestic
sense
Unto the thundersong that wheels the
spheres,
Scarce living in the Æolian harmony,
And flowing odour of the spacious air,
Scarce housed within the circle of this
Earth,
Be cabin'd up in words and syllables,
Which pass with that which breathes
them ? Sooner Earth
Might go round Heaven, and the strait
girth of Time
Inswathe the fulness of Eternity,
Than language grasp the infinite of Love.

O day which did enwomb that happy
hour,
Thou art blessed in the years, divinest day !
O Genius of that hour which dost uphold
Thy coronal of glory like a God,
Amid thy melancholy mates far-seen,
Who walk before thee, ever turning round
To gaze upon thee till their eyes are dim
With dwelling on the light and depth of
thine,

Thy name is ever worshipp'd among
 hours !
 Had I died then, I had not seem'd to die,
 For bliss stood round me like the light of
 Heaven,—
 Had I died then, I had not known the
 death ;
 Yea had the Power from whose right
 hand the light
 Of Life issueth, and from whose left hand
 floweth
 The Shadow of Death, perennial efflu-
 ences,
 Whereof to all that draw the wholesome
 air,
 Somewhile the one must overflow the
 other ;
 Then had he stemm'd my day with night,
 and driven
 My current to the fountain whence it
 sprang,—
 Even his own abiding excellence—
 On me, methinks, that shock of gloom
 had fall'n
 Unfelt, and in this glory I had merged
 The other, like the sun I gazed upon,
 Which seeming for the moment due to
 death,
 And dipping his head low beneath the
 verge,
 Yet bearing round about him his own day,
 In confidence of unabated strength,
 Steppeth from Heaven to Heaven, from
 light to light,
 And holdeth his undimmed forehead far
 Into a clearer zenith, pure of cloud.

We trod the shadow of the downward
 hill ;
 We past from light to dark. On the
 other side
 Is scoop'd a cavern and a mountain hall,
 Which none have fathom'd. If you go
 far in
 (The country people rumour) you may
 hear
 The moaning of the woman and the child,
 Shut in the secret chambers of the rock.
 I too have heard a sound—perchance of
 streams

Running far on within its inmost halls,
 The home of darkness ; but the cavern-
 mouth,
 Half overtrailed with a wanton weed,
 Gives birth to a brawling brook, that
 passing lightly
 Adown a natural stair of tangled roots,
 Is presently received in a sweet grave
 Of eglantines, a place of burial
 Far lovelier than its cradle ; for unseen,
 But taken with the sweetness of the place,
 It makes a constant bubbling melody
 That drowns the nearer echoes. Lower
 down
 Spreads out a little lake, that, flooding,
 leaves
 Low banks of yellow sand ; and from the
 woods
 That belt it rise three dark, tall cy-
 presses,—
 Three cypresses, symbols of mortal woe,
 That men plant over graves.

Hither we came,
 And sitting down upon the golden moss,
 Held converse sweet and low—low con-
 verse sweet,
 In which our voices bore least part. The
 wind
 Told a lovetale beside us, how he woo'd
 The waters, and the waters answering
 lisp'd
 To kisses of the wind, that, sick with love,
 Fainted at intervals, and grew again
 To utterance of passion. Ye cannot
 shape
 Fancy so fair as is this memory.
 Methought all excellence that ever was
 Had drawn herself from many thousand
 years,
 And all the separate Edens of this earth,
 To centre in this place and time. I
 listen'd,
 And her words stole with most prevailing
 sweetness
 Into my heart, as thronging fancies come
 To boys and girls when summer days are
 new,
 And soul and heart and body are all at
 ease :

What marvel my Camilla told me all?
It was so happy an hour, so sweet a place,
And I was as the brother of her blood,
And by that name I moved upon her
breath;

Dear name, which had too much of near-
ness in it

And heralded the distance of this time!
At first her voice was very sweet and low,
As if she were afraid of utterance;
But in the onward current of her speech,
(As echoes of the hollow-banked brooks
Are fashion'd by the channel which they
keep),

Her words did of their meaning borrow
sound,

Her cheek did catch the colour of her
words.

I heard and trembled, yet I could but
hear;

My heart paused—my raised eyelids
would not fall,

But still I kept my eyes upon the sky.
I seem'd the only part of Time stood still,
And saw the motion of all other things;
While her words, syllable by syllable,
Like water, drop by drop, upon my ear
Fell; and I wish'd, yet wish'd her not
to speak;

But she spake on, for I did name no wish,
What marvel my Camilla told me all
Her maiden dignities of Hope and Love—
'Perchance,' she said, 'return'd.' Even
then the stars

Did tremble in their stations as I gazed;
But she spake on, for I did name no wish,
No wish—no hope. Hope was not wholly
dead,

But breathing hard at the approach of
Death,—

Camilla, my Camilla, who was mine
No longer in the dearest sense of mine—
For all the secret of her inmost heart,
And all the maiden empire of her mind,
Lay like a map before me, and I saw
There, where I hoped myself to reign as
king,

There, where that day I crown'd myself
as king,

There in my realm and even on my throne,

Another! then it seem'd as tho' a link
Of some tight chain within my inmost
frame

Was riven in twain: that life I heeded not
Flow'd from me, and the darkness of the
grave,

The darkness of the grave and utter night,
Did swallow up my vision; at her feet,
Even the feet of her I loved, I fell,
Smit with exceeding sorrow unto Death.

Then had the earth beneath me yawn-
ing cloven

With such a sound as when an iceberg
splits

From cope to base—had Heaven from
all her doors,

With all her golden thresholds clashing,
roll'd

Her heaviest thunder—I had lain as
dead,

Mute, blind and motionless as then I lay;
Dead, for henceforth there was no life
for me!

Mute, for henceforth what use were
words to me!

Blind, for the day was as the night to
me!

The night to me was kinder than the
day;

The night in pity took away my day,
Because my grief as yet was newly born
Of eyes too weak to look upon the light;
And thro' the hasty notice of the ear
Frail Life was startled from the tender
love

Of him she brooded over. Would I had
lain

Until the plaited ivy-tress had wound
Round my worn limbs, and the wild brier
had driven

Its knotted thorns thro' my unpaining
brows,

Leaning its roses on my faded eyes.

The wind had blown above me, and the
rain

Had fall'n upon me, and the gilded snake
Had nestled in this bosom-throne of
Love,

But I had been at rest for evermore.

Long time entrancement held me. All
 too soon
 Life (like a wanton too-officious friend,
 Who will not *hear* denial, vain and rude
 With proffer of unwish'd-for services)
 Entering all the avenues of sense
 Past thro' into his citadel, the brain,
 With hated warmth of apprehensiveness.
 And first the chillness of the sprinkled
 brook
 Smote on my brows, and then I seem'd
 to hear
 Its murmur, as the drowning seaman
 hears,
 Who with his head below the surface
 dropt
 Listens the muffled booming indistinct
 Of the confused floods, and dimly knows
 His head shall rise no more : and then
 came in
 The white light of the weary moon
 above,
 Diffused and molten into flaky cloud.
 Was my sight drunk that it did shape to
 me
 Him who should own that name? Were
 it not well
 If so be that the echo of that name
 Ringing within the fancy had updrawn
 A fashion and a phantasm of the form
 It should attach to? Phantom!—had
 the ghastliest
 That ever lusted for a body, sucking
 The foul steam of the grave to thicken
 by it,
 There in the shuddering moonlight
 brought its face
 And what it has for eyes as close to
 mine
 As he did—better that than his, than he
 The friend, the neighbour, Lionel, the
 beloved,
 The loved, the lover, the happy Lionel,
 The low-voiced, tender-spirited Lionel,
 All joy, to whom my agony was a joy.
 O how her choice did leap forth from his
 eyes !
 O how her love did clothe itself in smiles
 About his lips ! and—not one moment's
 grace—

Then when the effect weigh'd seas upon
 my head
 To come my way ! to twit me with the
 cause !

 Was not the land as free thro' all her
 ways
 To him as me? Was not his wont to
 walk
 Between the going light and growing
 night?
 Had I not learnt my loss before he came?
 Could that be more because he came my
 way?
 Why should he not come my way if he
 would?
 And yet to-night, to-night—when all my
 wealth
 Flash'd from me in a moment and I fell
 Beggar'd for ever—why *should* he come
 my way
 Robed in those robes of light I must not
 wear,
 With that great crown of beams about his
 brows—
 Come like an angel to a damned soul,
 To tell him of the bliss he had with
 God—
 Come like a careless and a greedy heir
 That scarce can wait the reading of the
 will
 Before he takes possession? Was mine
 a mood
 To be invaded rudely, and not rather
 A sacred, secret, unapproached woe,
 Unspeakable? I was shut up with
 Grief;
 She took the body of my past delight,
 Narded and swathed and balm'd it for
 herself,
 And laid it in a sepulchre of rock
 Never to rise again. I was led mute
 Into her temple like a sacrifice;
 I was the High Priest in her holiest
 place,
 Not to be loudly broken in upon.

Oh friend, thoughts deep and heavy as
 these well-nigh
 O'erbore the limits of my brain : but he

Bent o'er me, and my neck his arm up-
 stay'd.
 I thought it was an adder's fold, and once
 I strove to disengage myself, but fail'd,
 Being so feeble: she bent above me, too;
 Wan was her cheek; for whatsoe'er of
 blight
 Lives in the dewy touch of pity had made
 The red rose there a pale one—and her
 eyes—
 I saw the moonlight glitter on their
 tears—
 And some few drops of that distressful
 rain
 Fell on my face, and her long ringlets
 moved,
 Drooping and beaten by the breeze, and
 brush'd
 My fallen forehead in their to and fro,
 For in the sudden anguish of her heart
 Loosed from their simple thrall they had
 flow'd abroad,
 And floated on and parted round her neck,
 Mantling her form halfway. She, when
 I woke,
 Something she ask'd, I know not what,
 and ask'd,
 Unanswer'd, since I spake not; for the
 sound
 Of that dear voice so musically low,
 And now first heard with any sense of
 pain,
 As it had taken life away before,
 Choked all the syllables, that strove to
 rise
 From my full heart.

 The blissful lover, too,
 From his great hoard of happiness dis-
 till'd
 Some drops of solace; like a vain rich
 man,
 That, having always prosper'd in the
 world,
 Folding his hands, deals comfortable
 words
 To hearts wounded for ever; yet, in
 truth,
 Fair speech was his and delicate of
 phrase,

Falling in whispers on the sense, ad-
 dress'd
 More to the inward than the outward
 ear,
 As rain of the midsummer midnight soft,
 Scarce-heard, recalling fragrance and the
 green
 Of the dead spring: but mine was wholly
 dead,
 No bud, no leaf, no flower, no fruit for
 me.
 Yet who had done, or who had suffer'd
 wrong?
 And why was I to darken their pure love,
 If, as I found, they two did love each
 other,
 Because my own was darken'd? Why
 was I
 To cross between their happy star and
 them?
 To stand a shadow by their shining doors,
 And vex them with my darkness? Did
 I love her?
 Ye know that I did love her; to this
 present
 My full-orb'd love has waned not. Did
 I love her,
 And could I look upon her tearful eyes?
 What had *she* done to weep? Why
 should *she* weep?
 O innocent of spirit—let my heart
 Break rather—whom the gentlest airs of
 Heaven
 Should kiss with an unwonted gentleness.
 Her love did murder mine? What then?
 She deem'd
 I wore a brother's mind: she call'd me
 brother:
 She told me all her love: she shall not
 weep.

The brightness of a burning thought,
 awhile
 In battle with the glooms of my dark will,
 Moonlike emerged, and to itself lit up
 There on the depth of an unfathom'd woe
 Reflex of action. Starting up at once,
 As from a dismal dream of my own death,
 I, for I loved her, lost my love in Love;
 I, for I loved her, graspt the hand she lov'd,

And laid it in her own, and sent my cry
Thro' the blank night to Him who loving
made

The happy and the unhappy love, that He
Would hold the hand of blessing over them,
Lionel, the happy, and her, and her, his
bride !

Let them so love that men and boys may
say,

'Lo ! how they love each other !' till
their love

Shall ripen to a proverb, unto all
Known, when their faces are forgot in
the land—

One golden dream of love, from which
may death

Awake them with heaven's music in a life
More living to some happier happiness,
Swallowing its precedent in victory.

And as for me, Camilla, as for me,—
The dew of tears is an unwholesome dew,
They will but sicken the sick plant the
more.

Deem that I love thee but as brothers do,
So shalt thou love me still as sisters do ;
Or if thou dream aught farther, dream
but how

I could have loved thee, had there been
none else

To love as lovers, loved again by thee.

Or this, or somewhat like to this, I
spake,

When I beheld her weep so ruefully ;
For sure my love should ne'er indue the
front

And mask of Hate, who lives on others'
moans.

Shall Love pledge Hatred in her bitter
draughts,

And batten on her poisons? Love forbid !
Love passeth not the threshold of cold
Hate,

And Hate is strange beneath the roof of
Love.

O Love, if thou be'st Love, dry up these
tears

Shed for the love of Love ; for tho' mine
image,

The subject of thy power, be cold in her,

Yet, like cold snow, it melteth in the
source

Of these sad tears, and feeds their down-
ward flow.

So Love, arraign'd to judgment and to
death,

Received unto himself a part of blame,
Being guiltless, as an innocent prisoner,
Who, when the woful sentence hath been
past,

And all the clearness of his fame hath gone
Beneath the shadow of the curse of man,
First falls asleep in swoon, wherefrom
awaked,

And looking round upon his tearful friends,
Forthwith and in his agony conceives
A shameful sense as of a cleaving crime—
For whence without some guilt should
such grief be ?

So died that hour, and fell into the
abysm

Of forms outworn, but not to me outworn,
Who never hail'd another—was there
one ?

There might be one—one other, worth
the life

That made it sensible. So that hour died
Like odour rapt into the winged wind
Borne into alien lands and far away.

There be some hearts so airily built,
that they,

They—when their love is wreck'd—if
Love can wreck—

On that sharp ridge of utmost doom ride
highly

Above the perilous seas of Change and
Chance ;

Nay, more, hold out the lights of cheer-
fulness ;

As the tall ship, that many a dreary year
Knit to some dismal sandbank far at sea,
All thro' the livelong hours of utter dark,
Showers slanting light upon the dolorous
wave.

For me—what light, what gleam on those
black ways

Where Love could walk with banish'd
Hope no more ?

It was ill-done to part you, Sisters fair ;
 Love's arms were wreath'd about the
 neck of Hope,
 And Hope kiss'd Love, and Love drew
 in her breath
 In that close kiss, and drank her
 whisper'd tales.
 They said that Love would die when
 Hope was gone,
 And Love mourn'd long, and sorrow'd
 after Hope ;
 At last she sought out Memory, and they
 trod
 The same old paths where Love had
 walk'd with Hope,
 And Memory fed the soul of Love with
 tears.

II

FROM that time forth I would not see
 her more ;
 But many weary moons I lived alone—
 Alone, and in the heart of the great forest.
 Sometimes upon the hills beside the sea
 All day I watch'd the floating isles of shade,
 And sometimes on the shore, upon the
 sands
 Insensibly I drew her name, until
 The meaning of the letters shot into
 My brain ; anon the wanton billow wash'd
 Them over, till they faded like my love.
 The hollow caverns heard me—the black
 brooks
 Of the midforest heard me—the soft
 winds,
 Laden with thistledown and seeds of
 flowers,
 Paused in their course to hear me, for my
 voice
 Was all of thee : the merry linnet knew
 me,
 The squirrel knew me, and the dragonfly
 Shot by me like a flash of purple fire.
 The rough brier tore my bleeding palms ;
 the hemlock,
 Brow-high, did strike my forehead as I
 past ;
 Yet trod I not the wildflower in my path,
 Nor bruised the wildbird's egg.

Was this the end ?
 Why grew we then together in one plot ?
 Why fed we from one fountain ? drew
 one sun ?
 Why were our mothers' branches of one
 stem ?
 Why were we one in all things, save in
 that
 Where to have been one had been the
 cope and crown
 Of all I hoped and fear'd ?—if that same
 nearness
 Were father to this distance, and that
 one
 Vauntcourier to this *double* ? if Affection
 Living slew Love, and Sympathy hew'd
 out
 The bosom-sepulchre of Sympathy ?

Chiefly I sought the cavern and the hill
 Where last we roam'd together, for the
 sound
 Of the loud stream was pleasant, and the
 wind
 Came wooingly with woodbine smells.
 Sometimes
 All day I sat within the cavern-mouth,
 Fixing my eyes on those three cypress-
 cones
 That spired above the wood ; and with
 mad hand
 Tearing the bright leaves of the ivy-
 screen,
 I cast them in the noisy brook beneath,
 And watch'd them till they vanish'd from
 my sight
 Beneath the bower of wreathed eglan-
 tines :
 And all the fragments of the living rock
 (Huge blocks, which some old trembling
 of the world
 Had loosen'd from the mountain, till they
 fell
 Half-digging their own graves) these in
 my agony
 Did I make bare of all the golden moss,
 Wherewith the dashing runnel in the
 spring
 Had liveried them all over. In my
 brain

The spirit seem'd to flag from thought to thought,
 As moonlight wandering thro' a mist : my blood
 Crept like marsh drains thro' all my languid limbs ;
 The motions of my heart seem'd far within me,
 Unfrequent, low, as tho' it told its pulses ;
 And yet it shook me, that my frame would shudder,
 As if 'twere drawn asunder by the rack.
 But over the deep graves of Hope and Fear,
 And all the broken palaces of the Past,
 Brooded one master-passion evermore,
 Like to a low-hung and a fiery sky
 Above some fair metropolis, earth-shock'd,—
 Hung round with ragged rims and burning folds,—
 Embathing all with wild and woful hues,
 Great hills of ruins, and collapsed masses
 Of thundershaken columns indistinct,
 And fused together in the tyrannous light—
 Ruins, the ruin of all my life and me !

Sometimes I thought Camilla was no more,
 Some one had told me she was dead,
 and ask'd
 If I would see her burial : then I seem'd
 To rise, and through the forest-shadow borne
 With more than mortal swiftness, I ran down
 The steepy sea-bank, till I came upon
 The rear of a procession, curving round
 The silver-sheeted bay : in front of which
 Six stately virgins, all in white, upbare
 A broad earth-sweeping pall of whitest lawn,
 Wreathed round the bier with garlands :
 in the distance,
 From out the yellow woods upon the hill
 Look'd forth the summit and the pinacles
 Of a gray steeple—thence at intervals

A low bell tolling. All the pageantry,
 Save those six virgins which upheld the bier,
 Were stoled from head to foot in flowing black ;
 One walk'd abreast with me, and veil'd his brow,
 And he was loud in weeping and in praise
 Of her, we follow'd : a strong sympathy
 Shook all my soul : I flung myself upon him
 In tears and cries : I told him all my love,
 How I had loved her from the first ; whereat
 He shrank and howl'd, and from his brow drew back
 His hand to push me from him ; and the face,
 The very face and form of Lionel
 Flash'd thro' my eyes into my innermost brain,
 And at his feet I seem'd to faint and fall,
 To fall and die away. I could not rise
 Albeit I strove to follow. They past on,
 The lordly Phantasms ! in their floating folds
 They past and were no more : but I had fallen
 Prone by the dashing runnel on the grass.

Always the inaudible invisible thought,
 Artificer and subject, lord and slave,
 Shaped by the audible and visible,
 Moulded the audible and visible ;
 All crisped sounds of wave and leaf and wind,
 Flatter'd the fancy of my fading brain ;
 The cloud-pavilion'd element, the wood,
 The mountain, the three cypresses, the cave,
 Storm, sunset, glows and glories of the moon
 Below black firs, when silent-creeping winds
 Laid the long night in silver streaks and bars,
 Were wrought into the tissue of my dream :
 The moanings in the forest, the loud brook,

Cries of the partridge like a rusty key
Turn'd in a lock, owl-whoop and dork-
hawk-whirr

Awoke me not, but were a part of sleep,
And voices in the distance calling to me
And in my vision bidding me dream on,
Like sounds without the twilight realm
of dreams,

Which wander round the bases of the
hills,

And murmur at the low-dropt eaves of
sleep,

Half-entering the portals. Oftentimes
The vision had fair prelude, in the end
Opening on darkness, stately vestibules
To caves and shows of Death : whether
the mind,

With some revenge—even to itself un-
known,—

Made strange division of its suffering
With her, whom to have suffering view'd
had been

Extremest pain ; or that the clear-eyed
Spirit,

Being blunted in the Present, grew at
length

Prophetical and prescient of whate'er
The Future had in store : or that which
most

Enchains belief, the sorrow of my spirit
Was of so wide a compass it took in
All I had loved, and my dull agony,
Ideally to her transferr'd, became
Anguish intolerable.

The day waned ;

Alone I sat with her : about my brow
Her warm breath floated in the utterance
Of silver-chorded tones : her lips were
sunder'd

With smiles of tranquil bliss, which broke
in light

Like morning from her eyes—her elo-
quent eyes,

(As I have seen them many a hundred
times)

Fill'd all with pure clear fire, thro' mine
down rain'd

Their spirit-searching splendours. As a
vision

Unto a haggard prisoner, iron-stay'd
In damp and dismal dungeons under-
ground,

Confined on points of faith, when strength
is shock'd

With torment, and expectancy of worse
Upon the morrow, thro' the ragged walls,
All unawares before his half-shut eyes,
Comes in upon him in the dead of night,
And with the excess of sweetness and of
awe,

Makes the heart tremble, and the sight
run over

Upon his steely gyves ; so those fair eyes
Shone on my darkness, forms which ever
stood

Within the magic cirque of memory,
Invisible but deathless, waiting still
The edict of the will to reassume
The semblance of those rare realities
Of which they were the mirrors. Now
the light

Which was their life, burst through the
cloud of thought

Keen, irrepressible.

It was a room.

Within the summer-house of which I spake,
Hung round with paintings of the sea,
and one

A vessel in mid-ocean, her heaved prow
Clambering, the mast bent and the ravin
wind

In her sail roaring. From the outer day,
Betwixt the close-set ivies came a broad
And solid beam of isolated light,
Crowded with driving atomies, and fell
Slanting upon that picture, from prime
youth

Well-known well-loved. She drew it
long ago

Forthgazing on the waste and open sea,
One morning when the upblown billow
ran

Shoreward beneath red clouds, and I had
pour'd

Into the shadowing pencil's naked forms
Colour and life : it was a bond and seal
Of friendship, spoken of with tearful
smiles ;

A monument of childhood and of love ;
 The poesy of childhood ; my lost love
 Symbol'd in storm. We gazed on it
 together
 In mute and glad remembrance, and
 each heart
 Grew closer to the other, and the eye
 Was riveted and charm-bound, gazing
 like
 The Indian on a still-eyed snake, low-
 couch'd—
 A beauty which is death ; when all at
 once
 That painted vessel, as with inner life,
 Began to heave upon that painted sea ;
 An earthquake, my loud heart-beats,
 made the ground
 Reel under us, and all at once, soul, life
 And breath and motion, past and flow'd
 away
 To those unreal billows : round and
 round
 A whirlwind caught and bore us ; mighty
 gyres
 Rapid and vast, of hissing spray wind-
 driven
 Far thro' the dizzy dark. Aloud she
 shriek'd ;
 My heart was cloven with pain ; I wound
 my arms
 About her : we whirl'd giddily ; the wind
 Sung ; but I clasp'd her without fear :
 her weight
 Shrank in my grasp, and over my dim
 eyes,
 And parted lips which drank her breath,
 down-hung
 The jaws of Death : I, groaning, from
 me flung
 Her empty phantom : all the sway and
 whirl
 Of the storm dropt to windless calm, and I
 Down welter'd thro' the dark ever and
 ever.

III

I CAME one day and sat among the
 stones
 Strewn in the entry of the moaning
 cave ;

A morning air, sweet after rain, ran
 over
 The rippling levels of the lake, and
 blew
 Coolness and moisture and all smells of
 bud
 And foliage from the dark and dripping
 woods
 Upon my fever'd brows that shook and
 throbb'd
 From temple unto temple. To what
 height
 The day had grown I know not. Then
 came on me
 The hollow tolling of the bell, and all
 The vision of the bier. As heretofore
 I walk'd behind with one who veil'd his
 brow.
 Methought by slow degrees the sullen
 bell
 Toll'd quicker, and the breakers on the
 shore
 Sloped into louder surf : those that went
 with me,
 And those that held the bier before my
 face,
 Moved with one spirit round about the
 bay,
 Trod swifter steps ; and while I walk'd
 with these
 In marvel at that gradual change, I
 thought
 Four bells instead of one began to ring,
 Four merry bells, four merry marriage-
 bells,
 In clanging cadence jangling peal on
 peal—
 A long loud clash of rapid marriage-
 bells.
 Then those who led the van, and those
 in rear,
 Rush'd into dance, and like wild Bac-
 chanals
 Fled onward to the steeple in the
 woods :
 I, too, was borne along and felt the
 blast
 Beat on my heated eyelids : all at once
 The front rank made a sudden halt ; the
 bells

Lapsed into frightful stillness ; the surge
 fell
 From thunder into whispers ; those six
 maids
 With shrieks and ringing laughter on the
 sand
 Threw down the bier ; the woods upon
 the hill
 Waved with a sudden gust that sweeping
 down
 Took the edges of the pall, and blew it
 far
 Until it hung, a little silver cloud
 Over the sounding seas : I turn'd : my
 heart
 Shrank in me, like a snowflake in the
 hand,
 Waiting to see the settled countenance
 Of her I loved, adorn'd with fading
 flowers.
 But she from out her death-like chrysalis,
 She from her bier, as into fresher life,
 My sister, and my cousin, and my
 love,
 Leapt lightly clad in bridal white—her
 hair
 Studded with one rich Provence rose—a
 light
 Of smiling welcome round her lips—her
 eyes
 And cheeks as bright as when she climb'd
 the hill.
 One hand she reach'd to those that came
 behind,
 And while I mused nor yet endured to
 take
 So rich a prize, the man who stood with
 me
 Stept gaily forward, throwing down his
 robes,
 And claspt her hand in his : again the
 bells
 Jangled and clang'd : again the stormy
 surf
 Crash'd in the shingle : and the whirling
 rout
 Led by those two rush'd into dance, and
 fled
 Wind-footed to the steeple in the
 woods,

Till they were swallow'd in the leafy
 bowers,
 And I stood sole beside the vacant bier.

There, there, my latest vision—then the
 event !

IV

THE GOLDEN SUPPER¹

(*Another speaks*)

HE flies the event : he leaves the event
 to me :

Poor Julian—how he rush'd away ; the
 bells,

Those marriage-bells, echoing in ear and
 heart—

But cast a parting glance at me, you saw,
 As who should say 'Continue.' Well
 he had

One golden hour—of triumph shall I say ?
 Solace at least—before he left his home.

Would you had seen him in that hour
 of his !

He moved thro' all of it majestically—
 Restrain'd himself quite to the close—
 but now—

Whether they *were* his lady's marriage-
 bells,

Or prophets of them in his fantasy,
 I never ask'd : but Lionel and the girl
 Were wedded, and our Julian came
 again

Back to his mother's house among the
 pines.

But these, their gloom, the mountains and
 the Bay,

The whole land weigh'd him down as
 Ætna does

The Giant of Mythology : he would go,
 Would leave the land for ever, and had
 gone

Surely, but for a whisper, 'Go not yet,'
 Some warning—sent divinely—as it
 seem'd

¹ This poem is founded upon a story in Boccaccio. See Introduction, p. 476.

By that which follow'd—but of this I
deem

As of the visions that he told—the event
Glanced back upon them in his after
life,

And partly made them—tho' he knew it
not.

And thus he stay'd and would not look
at her—

No not for months: but, when the
eleventh moon

After their marriage lit the lover's Bay,
Heard yet once more the tolling bell, and
said,

Would you could toll me out of life, but
found—

All softly as his mother broke it to him—
A crueller reason than a crazy ear,
For that low knell tolling his lady dead—
Dead—and had lain three days without
a pulse:

All that look'd on her had pronounced
her dead.

And so they bore her (for in Julian's land
They never nail a dumb head up in
elm),

Bore her free-faced to the free airs of
heaven,

And laid her in the vault of her own kin.

What did he then? not die: he is here
and hale—

Not plunge headforemost from the moun-
tain there,

And leave the name of Lover's Leap:
not he:

He knew the meaning of the whisper now,
Thought that he knew it. 'This, I stay'd
for this;

O love, I have not seen you for so long.
Now, now, will I go down into the grave,
I will be all alone with all I love,
And kiss her on the lips. She is his no
more:

The dead returns to me, and I go down
To kiss the dead.'

The fancy stirr'd him so

He rose and went, and entering the dim
vault,

And, making there a sudden light, beheld
All round about him that which all will
be.

The light was but a flash, and went again.
Then at the far end of the vault he saw
His lady with the moonlight on her face;
Her breast as in a shadow-prison, bars
Of black and bands of silver, which the
moon

Struck from an open grating overhead
High in the wall, and all the rest of her
Drown'd in the gloom and horror of the
vault.

'It was my wish,' he said, 'to pass, to
sleep,

To rest, to be with her—till the great
day

Peal'd on us with that music which rights
all,

And raised us hand in hand.' And
kneeling there

Down in the dreadful dust that once was
man,

Dust, as he said, that once was loving
hearts,

Hearts that had beat with such a love as
mine—

Not such as mine, no, nor for such as
her—

He softly put his arm about her neck
And kiss'd her more than once, till help-
less death

And silence made him bold—nay, but I
wrong him,

He revered his dear lady even in
death;

But, placing his true hand upon her
heart,

'O, you warm heart,' he moan'd, 'not
even death

Can chill you all at once': then starting,
thought

His dreams had come again. 'Do I
wake or sleep?

Or am I made immortal, or my love
Mortal once more?' It beat—the heart
—it beat:

Faint—but it beat: at which his own
began

To pulse with such a vehemence that it
drown'd

The feebler motion underneath his hand.
But when at last his doubts were satisfied,
He raised her softly from the sepulchre,
And, wrapping her all over with the cloak
He came in, and now striding fast, and
now

Sitting awhile to rest, but evermore
Holding his golden burthen in his arms,
So bore her thro' the solitary land
Back to the mother's house where she
was born.

There the good mother's kindly minis-
tering,
With half a night's appliances, recall'd
Her fluttering life : she rais'd an eye that
ask'd
'Where?' till the things familiar to her
youth
Had made a silent answer : then she spoke
'Here ! and how came I here?' and
learning it
(They told her somewhat rashly as I
think)

At once began to wander and to wail,
'Ay, but you know that you must give
me back :

Send ! bid him come' ; but Lionel was
away—
Stung by his loss had vanish'd, none
knew where.

'He casts me out,' she wept, 'and goes'
—a wail

That seeming something, yet was nothing,
born

Not from believing mind, but shatter'd
nerve,

Yet haunting Julian, as her own reproof
At some precipitance in her burial.
Then, when her own true spirit had
return'd,

'Oh yes, and you,' she said, 'and none
but you ?

For you have given me life and love again,
And none but you yourself shall tell him
of it,

And you shall give me back when he
returns.'

'Stay then a little,' answer'd Julian,
'here,

And keep yourself, none knowing, to
yourself ;

And I will do your will. I may not stay,
No, not an hour ; but send me notice of
him

When he returns, and then will I return,
And I will make a solemn offering of you
To him you love.' And faintly she
replied,

'And I will do *your* will, and none shall
know.'

Not know ? with such a secret to be
known.

But all their house was old and loved
them both,

And all the house had known the loves
of both ;

Had died almost to serve them any way,
And all the land was waste and solitary :
And then he rode away ; but after this,
An hour or two, Camilla's travail came
Upon her, and that day a boy was born,
Heir of his face and land, to Lionel.

And thus our lonely lover rode away,
And pausing at a hostel in a marsh,
There fever seized upon him : myself was
then

Travelling that land, and meant to rest
an hour ;

And sitting down to such a base repast,
It makes me angry yet to speak of it—
I heard a groaning overhead, and climb'd
The moulder'd stairs (for everything was
vile)

And in a loft, with none to wait on him,
Found, as it seem'd, a skeleton alone,
Raving of dead men's dust and beating
hearts.

A dismal hostel in a dismal land,
A flat malarian world of reed and rush !
But there from fever and my care of him
Sprang up a friendship that may help us
yet.

For while we roam'd along the dreary
coast,

And waited for her message, piece by piece
 I learnt the drearier story of his life ;
 And, tho' he loved and honour'd Lionel,
 Found that the sudden wail his lady
 made

Dwelt in his fancy : did he know her
 worth,

Her beauty even? should he not betought,
 Ev'n by the price that others set upon it,
 The value of that jewel he had to guard?

Suddenly came her notice and we past,
 I with our lover to his native Bay.

This love is of the brain, the mind, the
 soul :

That makes the sequel pure ; tho' some
 of us

Beginning at the sequel know no more.
 Not such am I : and yet I say the bird
 That will not hear my call, however
 sweet,

But if my neighbour whistle answers
 him—

What matter? there are others in the
 wood.

Yet when I saw her (and I thought him
 crazed,

Tho' not with such a craziness as needs
 A cell and keeper), those dark eyes of
 hers—

Oh! such dark eyes! and not her eyes
 alone,

But all from these to where she touch'd
 on earth,

For such a craziness as Julian's look'd
 No less than one divine apology.

So sweetly and so modestly she came
 To greet us, her young hero in her arms!
 'Kiss him,' she said. 'You gave me
 life again.

He, but for you, had never seen it once.
 His other father you! Kiss him, and then
 Forgive him, if his name be Julian too.'

Talk of lost hopes and broken heart!
 his own

Sent such a flame into his face, I knew
 Some sudden vivid pleasure hit him
 there.

But he was all the more resolved to go,
 And sent at once to Lionel, praying him
 By that great love they both had borne
 the dead,

To come and revel for one hour with him
 Before he left the land for evermore ;

And then to friends—they were not many
 —who lived

Scatteringly about that lonely land of
 his,

And bad them to a banquet of farewells.

And Julian made a solemn feast : I
 never

Sat at a costlier ; for all round his hall
 From column on to column, as in a
 wood,

Not such as here—an equatorial one,
 Great garlands swung and blossom'd ;
 and beneath,

Heirlooms, and ancient miracles of Art,
 Chalice and salver, wines that, Heaven
 knows when,

Had suck'd the fire of some forgotten
 sun,

And kept it thro' a hundred years of
 gloom,

Yet glowing in a heart of ruby—cups
 Where nymph and god ran ever round in
 gold—

Others of glass as costly—some with
 gems

Moveable and resettable at will,
 And trebling all the rest in value—Ah
 heavens !

Why need I tell you all?—suffice to say
 That whatsoever such a house as his,
 And his was old, has in it rare or fair
 Was brought before the guest : and they,
 the guests,

Wonder'd at some strange light in Julian's
 eyes

(I told you that he had his golden hour),
 And such a feast, ill-suited as it seem'd
 To such a time, to Lionel's loss and his
 And that resolved self-exile from a land
 He never would revisit, such a feast
 So rich, so strange, and stranger ev'n
 than rich,

But rich as for the nuptials of a king.

And stranger yet, at one end of the hall
 Two great funereal curtains, looping down,
 Parted a little ere they met the floor,
 About a picture of his lady, taken
 Some years before, and falling hid the frame.
 And just above the parting was a lamp :
 So the sweet figure folded round with night
 Seem'd stepping out of darkness with a smile.

Well then—our solemn feast—we ate
 and drank,
 And might—the wines being of such nobleness—
 Have jested also, but for Julian's eyes,
 And something weird and wild about it all :
 What was it ? for our lover seldom spoke,
 Scarce touch'd the meats ; but ever and anon
 A priceless goblet with a priceless wine
 Arising, show'd he drank beyond his use ;
 And when the feast was near an end, he said :

‘ There is a custom in the Orient,
 friends—
 I read of it in Persia—when a man
 Will honour those who feast with him,
 he brings
 And shows them whatsoever he accounts
 Of all his treasures the most beautiful,
 Gold, jewels, arms, whatever it may be.
 This custom—’

Pausing here a moment, all
 The guests broke in upon him with
 meeting hands
 And cries about the banquet—‘ Beautiful !
 Who could desire more beauty at a feast ? ’

The lover answer'd, ‘ There is more
 than one
 Here sitting who desires it. Laud me not
 Before my time, but hear me to the close.
 This custom steps yet further when the
 guest
 Is loved and honour'd to the uttermost.

T

For after he hath shown him gems or gold,
 He brings and sets before him in rich
 guise
 That which is thrice as beautiful as these,
 The beauty that is dearest to his heart—
 “ O my heart's lord, would I could show
 you,” he says,
 “ Ev'n my heart too.” And I propose
 to-night
 To show you what is dearest to my heart,
 And my heart too.

‘ But solve me first a doubt.
 I knew a man, nor many years ago ;
 He had a faithful servant, one who loved
 His master more than all on earth beside.
 He falling sick, and seeming close on
 death,
 His master would not wait until he died,
 But bad his menials bear him from the
 door,
 And leave him in the public way to die.
 I knew another, not so long ago,
 Who found the dying servant, took him
 home,
 And fed, and cherish'd him, and saved
 his life.
 I ask you now, should this first master
 claim
 His service, whom does it belong to ?
 him
 Who thrust him out, or him who saved
 his life ? ’

This question, so flung down before
 the guests,
 And balanced either way by each, at
 length
 When some were doubtful how the law
 would hold,
 Was handed over by consent of all
 To one who had not spoken, Lionel.

Fair speech was his, and delicate of
 phrase.
 And he beginning languidly—his loss
 Weigh'd on him yet—but warming as he
 went,
 Glanced at the point of law, to pass it by,
 Affirming that as long as either lived,

2 K

By all the laws of love and gratefulness,
 The service of the one so saved was due
 All to the saver—adding, with a smile,
 The first for many weeks—a semi-smile
 As at a strong conclusion—‘body and
 soul
 And life and limbs, all his to work his will.’

Then Julian made a secret sign to me
 To bring Camilla down before them all.
 And crossing her own picture as she came,
 And looking as much lovelier as herself
 Is lovelier than all others—on her head
 A diamond circlet, and from under this
 A veil, that seemed no more than gilded
 air,

Flying by each fine ear, an Eastern gauze
 With seeds of gold—so, with that grace
 of hers,

Slow-moving as a wave against the wind,
 That flings a mist behind it in the sun—
 And bearing high in arms the mighty babe,
 The younger Julian, who himself was
 crown’d

With roses, none so rosy as himself—
 And over all her babe and her the jewels
 Of many generations of his house
 Sparkled and flash’d, for he had decked
 them out

As for a solemn sacrifice of love—
 So she came in :—I am long in telling it,
 I never yet beheld a thing so strange,
 Sad, sweet, and strange together—floated
 in—

While all the guests in mute amazement
 rose—

And slowly pacing to the middle hall,
 Before the board, there paused and stood,
 her breast

Hard-heaving, and her eyes upon her feet,
 Not daring yet to glance at Lionel.
 But him she carried, him nor lights nor
 feast

Dazed or amazed, nor eyes of men ; who
 cared

Only to use his own, and staring wide
 And hungering for the gilt and jewell’d
 world

About him, look’d, as he is like to prove,
 When Julian goes, the lord of all he saw.

‘My guests,’ said Julian : ‘you are
 honour’d now

Ev’n to the uttermost : in her behold
 Of all my treasures the most beautiful,
 Of all things upon earth the dearest to me.’
 Then waving us a sign to seat ourselves,
 Led his dear lady to a chair of state.
 And I, by Lionel sitting, saw his face
 Fire, and dead ashes and all fire again
 Thrice in a second, felt him tremble too,
 And heard him muttering, ‘So like, so
 like ;

She never had a sister. I knew none.
 Some cousin of his and hers—O God, so
 like !’

And then he suddenly ask’d her if she
 were.

She shook, and cast her eyes down, and
 was dumb.

And then some other question’d if she
 came

From foreign lands, and still she did not
 speak.

Another, if the boy were hers : but she
 To all their queries answer’d not a word,
 Which made the amazement more, till
 one of them

Said, shuddering, ‘Her spectre !’ But
 his friend

Replied, in half a whisper, ‘Not at least
 The spectre that will speak if spoken to.
 Terrible pity, if one so beautiful

Prove, as I almost dread to find her,
 dumb !’

But Julian, sitting by her, answer’d all :
 ‘She is but dumb, because in her you
 see

That faithful servant whom we spoke
 about,

Obedient to her second master now ;
 Which will not last. I have here to-night
 a guest

So bound to me by common love and
 loss—

What ! shall I bind him more ? in his
 behalf,

Shall I exceed the Persian, giving him
 That which of all things is the dearest to
 me,

Not only showing ? and he himself pronounced

That my rich gift is wholly mine to give.

‘Now all be dumb, and promise all of you

Not to break in on what I say by word
Or whisper, while I show you all my heart.’

And then began the story of his love
As here to-day, but not so wordily—
The passionate moment would not suffer that—

Past thro’ his visions to the burial ; thence
Down to this last strange hour in his own hall ;

And then rose up, and with him all his guests

Once more as by enchantment ; all but he,
Lionel, who fain had risen, but fell again,
And sat as if in chains—to whom he said :

‘Take my free gift, my cousin, for your wife ;

And were it only for the giver’s sake,
And tho’ she seem so like the one you lost,
Yet cast her not away so suddenly,
Lest there be none left here to bring her back :

I leave this land for ever.’ Here he ceased.

Then taking his dear lady by one hand,
And bearing on one arm the noble babe,
He slowly brought them both to Lionel.
And there the widower husband and dead wife

Rush’d each at each with a cry, that rather seem’d

For some new death than for a lifer renew’d ;
Whereat the very babe began to wail ;
At once they turn’d, and caught and brought him in

To their charm’d circle, and, half killing him

With kisses, round him closed and claspt again.

But Lionel, when at last he freed himself
From wife and child, and lifted up a face
All over glowing with the sun of life,
And love, and boundless thanks—the sight of this

So frighted our good friend, that turning to me

And saying, ‘It is over : let us go’—
There were our horses ready at the doors—

We bade them no farewell, but mounting these

He past for ever from his native land ;
And I with him, my Julian, back to mine.

TO ALFRED TENNYSON

MY GRANDSON

GOLDEN-HAIR’D Ally whose name is one with mine,

Crazy with laughter and babble and earth’s new wine,

Now that the flower of a year and a half is thine,
O little blossom, O mine, and mine of mine,
Glorious poet who never hast written a line,
Laugh, for the name at the head of my verse is thine.

May’st thou never be wrong’d by the name that is mine !

THE FIRST QUARREL

(IN THE ISLE OF WIGHT)

I

‘WAIT a little,’ you say, ‘you are sure it ’ll all come right,’

But the boy was born i’ trouble, an’ looks so wan an’ so white :

Wait ! an’ once I ha’ waited—I hadn’t to wait for long.

Now I wait, wait, wait for Harry.—No, no, you are doing me wrong !

Harry and I were married : the boy can hold up his head,

The boy was born in wedlock, but after my man was dead ;

I ha’ work’d for him fifteen years, an’ I work an’ I wait to the end.

I am all alone in the world, an’ you are my only friend.

II

Doctor, if *you* can wait, I’ll tell you the tale o’ my life.

When Harry an’ I were children, he call’d me his own little wife ;

I was happy when I was with him, an'
 sorry when he was away,
 An' when we play'd together, I loved him
 better than play;
 He workt me the daisy chain—he made
 me the cowslip ball,
 He fought the boys that were rude, an' I
 loved him better than all.
 Passionate girl tho' I was, an' often at
 home in disgrace,
 I never could quarrel with Harry—I had
 but to look in his face.

III

There was a farmer in Dorset of Harry's
 kin, that had need
 Of a good stout lad at his farm; he sent,
 an' the father agreed;
 So Harry was bound to the Dorsetshire
 farm for years an' for years;
 I walked with him down to the quay,
 poor lad, an' we parted in tears.
 The boat was beginning to move, we
 heard them a-ringing the bell,
 'I'll never love any but you, God bless
 you, my own little Nell.'

IV

I was a child, an' he was a child, an' he
 came to harm;
 There was a girl, a hussy, that workt with
 him up at the farm,
 One had deceived her an' left her alone
 with her sin an' her shame,
 And so she was wicked with Harry; the
 girl was the most to blame.

V

And years went over till I that was little
 had grown so tall,
 The men would say of the maids, 'Our
 Nelly's the flower of 'em all.'
 I didn't take heed o' *them*, but I taught
 myself all I could
 To make a good wife for Harry, when
 Harry came home for good.

VI

Often I seem'd unhappy, and often as
 happy too,
 For I heard it abroad in the fields 'I'll
 never love any but you';

'I'll never love any but you' the morning
 song of the lark,
 'I'll never love any but you' the nightin-
 gale's hymn in the dark.

VII

And Harry came home at last, but he
 look'd at me sidelong and shy,
 Vext me a bit, till he told me that so
 many years had gone by,
 I had grown so handsome and tall—that
 I might ha' forgot him somehow—
 For he thought—there were other lads—
 he was fear'd to look at me now.

VIII

Hard was the frost in the field, we were
 married o' Christmas day,
 Married among the red berries, an' all as
 merry as May—
 Those were the pleasant times, my house
 an' my man were my pride,
 We seem'd like ships i' the Channel a-
 sailing with wind an' tide.

IX

But work was scant in the Isle, tho' he
 tried the villages round,
 So Harry went over the Solent to see if
 work could be found;
 An' he wrote 'I ha' six weeks' work,
 little wife, so far as I know;
 I'll come for an hour to-morrow, an' kiss
 you before I go.'

X

So I set to righting the house, for wasn't
 he coming that day?
 An' I hit on an old deal-box that was
 push'd in a corner away,
 It was full of old odds an' ends, an' a
 letter along wi' the rest,
 I had better ha' put my naked hand in a
 hornets' nest.

XI

'Sweetheart'—this was the letter—this
 was the letter I read—
 'You promised to find me work near you,
 an' I wish I was dead—

Didn't you kiss me an' promise? you
haven't done it, my lad,
An' I almost died o' your going away,
an' I wish that I had.'

XII

I too wish that I had—in the pleasant
times that had past,
Before I quarrell'd with Harry—*my*
quarrel—the first an' the last.

XIII

For Harry came in, an' I flung him the
letter that drove me wild,
An' he told it me all at once, as simple as
any child,
'What can it matter, my lass, what I did
wi' my single life?
I ha' been as true to you as ever a man to
his wife;
An' *she* wasn't one o' the worst.' 'Then,'
I said, 'I'm none o' the best.'
An' he smiled at me, 'Ain't you, my love?
Come, come, little wife, let it rest!
The man isn't like the woman, no need
to make such a stir.'
But he anger'd me all the more, an' I said
'You were keeping with her,
When I was a-loving you all along an' the
same as before.'
An' he didn't speak for a while an' he
anger'd me more and more.

Then he patted my hand in his gentle
way, 'Let bygones be!'
'Bygones! you kept yours hush'd,' I said,
'when you married me!
By-gones ma' be come-agains; an' *she*—
in her shame an' her sin—
You'll have her to nurse my child, if I
die o' my lying in!
You'll make her its second mother! I
hate her—an' I hate you!'
Ah, Harry, my man, you had better ha'
beaten me black an' blue
Than ha' spoken as kind as you did,
when I were so crazy wi' spite,
'Wait a little, my lass, I am sure it 'ill
all come right.'

XIV

An' he took three turns in the rain, an' I
watch'd him, an' when he came in

I felt that my heart was hard, he was all
wet thro' to the skin,
An' I never said 'off wi' the wet,' I never
said 'on wi' the dry,'
So I knew my heart was hard, when he
came to bid me goodbye.
'You said that you hated me, Ellen, but
that isn't true, you know;
I am going to leave you a bit—you'll kiss
me before I go?'

XV

'Going! you're going to her—kiss-her—
if you will,' I said—
I was near my time wi' the boy, I must
ha' been light i' my head—
'I had sooner be cursed than kiss'd!'
I didn't know well what I meant,
But I turn'd my face from *him*, an' he
turn'd *his* face an' he went.

XVI

And then he sent me a letter, 'I've gotten
my work to do;
You wouldn't kiss me, my lass, an' I
never loved any but you;
I am sorry for all the quarrel an' sorry for
what she wrote,
I ha' six weeks' work in Jersey an' go to-
night by the boat.'

XVII

An' the wind began to rise, an' I thought
of him out at sea,
An' I felt I had been to blame; he was
always kind to me.
'Wait a little, my lass, I am sure it 'ill
all come right'
An' the boat went down that night—the
boat went down that night.

RIZPAH

17—

I

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind
over land and sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind, 'O mother,
come out to me.'

Why should he call me to-night, when he
knows that I cannot go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and
the full moon stares at the snow.

II

We should be seen, my dear; they would
spy us out of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the
storm rushing over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am
led by the creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I
find myself drenched with the rain.

III

Anything fallen again? nay—what was
there left to fall?
I have taken them home, I have number'd
the bones, I have hidden them all.
What am I saying? and what are *you*?
do you come as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the
tree falls so must it lie.

IV

Who let her in? how long has she been?
you—what have you heard?
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have
spoken a word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none
of their spies—
But the night has crept into my heart,
and begun to darken my eyes.

V

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what
should *you* know of the night,
The blast and the burning shame and the
bitter frost and the fright?
I have done it, while you were asleep—
you were only made for the day.
I have gather'd my baby together—and
now you may go your way.

VI

Nay—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit
by an old dying wife.
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have
only an hour of life.

I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he
went out to die.

'They dared me to do it,' he said, and he
never has told me a lie.

I whipt him for robbing an orchard once
when he was but a child—

'The farmer dared me to do it,' he said;
he was always so wild—

And idle—and couldn't be idle—my
Willy—he never could rest.

The King should have made him a soldier,
he would have been one of his best.

VII

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and
they never would let him be good;

They swore that he dare not rob the mail,
and he swore that he would;

And he took no life, but he took one
purse, and when all was done

He flung it among his fellows—I'll none
of it, said my son.

VIII

I came into court to the Judge and the
lawyers. I told them my tale,

God's own truth—but they kill'd him,
they kill'd him for robbing the mail.

They hang'd him in chains for a show—
we had always borne a good name—

To be hang'd for a thief—and then put
away—isn't that enough shame?

Dust to dust—low down—let us hide!
but they set him so high

That all the ships of the world could
stare at him, passing by.

God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and
horrible fowls of the air,

But not the black heart of the lawyer who
kill'd him and hang'd him there.

IX

And the jailer forced me away. I had
bid him my last goodbye;

They had fasten'd the door of his cell.
'O mother!' I heard him cry.

I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had
something further to say,

And now I never shall know it. The
jailer forced me away.

X

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry
 of my boy that was dead,
 They seized me and shut me up : they
 fasten'd me down on my bed.
 'Mother, O mother !'—he call'd in the
 dark to me year after year—
 They beat me for that, they beat me—
 you know that I couldn't but hear ;
 And then at the last they found I had
 grown so stupid and still
 They let me abroad again—but the
 creatures had worked their will.

XI

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of
 my bone was left—
 I stole them all from the lawyers—and
 you, will you call it a theft ?—
 My baby, the bones that had suck'd me,
 the bones that had laughed and
 had cried—
 Theirs? O no! they are mine—not
 theirs—they had moved in my side.

XII

Do you think I was scared by the bones?
 I kiss'd 'em, I buried 'em all—
 I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night
 by the churchyard wall.
 My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the
 trumpet of judgment 'ill sound,
 But I charge you never to say that I laid
 him in holy ground.

XIII

They would scratch him up—they wo
 hang him again on the cursed tree.
 Sin? O yes—we are sinners, I know—
 let all that be,
 And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's
 good will toward men—
 'Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord'
 —let me hear it again ;
 'Full of compassion and mercy—long-
 suffering.' Yes, O yes !
 For the lawyer is born but to murder—
 the Saviour lives but to bless.

He'll never put on the black cap except
 for the worst of the worst,
 And the first may be last—I have heard it
 in church—and the last may be
 first.
 Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the
 Lord must know,
 Year after year in the mist and the wind
 and the shower and the snow.

XIV

Heard, have you? what? they have told
 you he never repented his sin.
 How do they know it? are *they* his
 mother? are *you* of his kin?
 Heard! have you ever heard, when the
 storm on the downs began,
 The wind that 'ill wail like a child and
 the sea that 'ill moan like a man?

XV

Election, Election and Reprobation—it's
 all very well.
 But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall
 not find him in Hell.
 For I cared so much for my boy that the
 Lord has look'd into my care,
 And He means me I'm sure to be happy
 with Willy, I know not where.

XVI

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul,
 that is all your desire :
 Do you think that I care for *my* soul if
 my boy be gone to the fire?
 I have been with God in the dark—go,
 go, you may leave me alone—
 You never have borne a child—you are
 just as hard as a stone.

XVII

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think
 that you mean to be kind,
 But I cannot hear what you say for my
 Willy's voice in the wind—
 The snow and the sky so bright—he used
 but to call in the dark,
 And he calls to me now from the church
 and not from the gibbet—for hark !

Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking the walls—
Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am going. He calls.

THE NORTHERN COBBLER

I

WAÄIT till our Sally cooms in, fur thou mun 'a sights¹ to tell.

Eh, but I be maäin glad to seeä tha sa 'arty an' well.

'Cast awaäy on a disolut land wi' a vartical soon² !'

Strange fur to goä fur to think what saäilors 'a seëan an' 'a doon;

'Summat to drink—sa' 'ot?' I 'a nowt but Adam's wine:

What's the 'eät o' this little 'ill-side to the 'eät o' the line?

II

'What's i' tha bottle a-stanning theer?' I'll tell tha. Gin.

But if thou wants thy grog, tha mun goä fur it down to the inn.

Naay—fur I be maäin glad, but thaw tha was iver sa dry,

Thou gits naw gin fro' the bottle theer, an' I'll tell tha why.

III

Meä an' thy sister was married, when wur it? back-end o' June,

Ten year sin', and wa 'greed as well as a fiddle i' tune:

I could fettle and clump owd booöts and shoes wi' the best on 'em all,

As fer as fro' Thursby thurn hup to Harmsby and Hutterby Hall.

¹ The vowels *ai*, pronounced separately though in the closest conjunction, best render the sound of the long *i* and *y* in this dialect. But since such words as *craäin*, *daäin*, *whaä*, *ai* (I), etc., look awkward except in a page of express phonetics, I have thought it better to leave the simple *i* and *y*, and to trust that my readers will give them the broader pronunciation.

² The *oo* short, as in 'wood.'

We was busy as beeäs i' the bloom an' as 'appy as 'art could think,
An' then the babby wur burn, and then I taäkes to the drink.

IV

An' I weänt gaäinsaäy it, my lad, thaw I be hafe shaämed on it now,

We could sing a good song at the Plow, we could sing a good song at the Plow;

Thaw once of a frosty night I slither'd an' hurted my huck,¹

An' I coom'd neck-an'-crop soomtimes slaäpe down i' the squad an' the muck;

An' once I fowt wi' the Taäilor—not hafe ov a man, my lad—

Fur he scrawm'd an' scratted my faäce like a cat, an' it maäde 'er sa mad

That Sally she turn'd a tongue-banger,² an' raäted ma, 'Sottin' thy braäins

Guzzlin' an' soäkin' an' smoäkin' an' hawmin'³ about i' the laänes,

Soä sow-droonk that tha doesn not touch thy 'at to the Squire';

An' I looök'd cock-eyed at my noäse an' I seeäd 'im a-gittin' o' fire;

But sin' I wur hallus i' liquor an' hallus as droonk as a king,

Foälks' coostom flitted awaäy like a kite wi' a brokken string.

V

An' Sally she wesh'd foälks' cloäths to keep the wolf fro' the door,

Eh but the moor she riled me, she druv me to drink the moor,

Fur I fun', when 'er back wur turn'd, wheer Sally's owd stockin' wur 'id,

An' I grabb'd the munny she maäde, and I weär'd it o' liquor, I did.

VI

An' one night I cooms 'oäm like a bull gotten loose at a faäir,

An' she wur a-waäitin' fo'mma, an' cryin' and teärin' 'er 'aäir,

¹ Hip.

² Scold.

³ Lounging.

An' I tummled athurt the craädle an'
 sweär'd as I'd breäk ivry stick
 O' furnitur 'ere i' the 'ouse, an' I gied
 our Sally a kick,
 An' I mash'd the taäbles an' chairs, an'
 she an' the babby beäl'd,¹
 Fur I knaw'd naw moor what I did nor
 a mortal beäst o' the feäld.

VII

An' when I waäked i' the murnin' I seeäd
 that our Sally went laämed
 'Cos o' the kick as I gied 'er, an' I wur
 dreädful ashaämed;
 An' Sally wur sloomy² an' draggle taäil'd
 in an owd turn gown,
 An' the babby's faäce wurn't wesh'd an'
 the 'ole 'ouse hupside down.

VIII

An' then I minded our Sally sa pratty
 an' neät an' sweät,
 Straät as a pole an' cleän as a flower fro'
 'eäd to feeät:
 An' then I minded the fust kiss I gied
 'er by Thursby thurn;
 Theer wur a lark a-singin' 'is best of a
 Sunday at murn,
 Couldn't see 'im, we 'eärd 'im a-mountin'
 oop 'igher an' 'igher,
 An' then 'e turn'd to the sun, an' 'e
 shined like a sparkle o' fire.
 'Doesn't tha see 'im,' she axes, 'fur I
 can see 'im?' an' I
 Seeäd nobbut the smile o' the sun as
 danced in 'er pratty blue eye;
 An' I says 'I mun gie tha a kiss,' an'
 Sally says 'Noä, thou moänt,'
 But I gied 'er a kiss, an' then anoother,
 an' Sally says 'doänt!'

IX

An' when we coom'd into Meeätin', at
 fust she wur all in a tew,
 But, arter, we sing'd the 'ymn together
 like birds on a beugh;

¹ Bellowed, cried out.² Sluggish, out of spirits.

An' Muggins 'e preäch'd o' Hell-fire an'
 the loov o' God fur men,
 An' then upo' coomin' awaäy Sally gied
 me a kiss ov 'ersen.

X

Heer wur a fall fro' a kiss to a kick like
 Saätan as fell
 Down out o' heaven i' Hell-fire—thaw
 theer's naw drinkin' i' Hell;
 Meä fur to kick our Sally as kep the wolf
 fro' the door,
 All along o' the drink, fur I loov'd 'er
 as well as afoor.

XI

Sa like a greät num-cumpus I blubber'd
 awaäy o' the bed—
 'Weänt niver do it naw moor'; an'
 Sally looökt up an' she said,
 'I'll upowd it¹ tha weänt; thou'rt like
 the rest o' the men,
 Thou'll goä sniffin' about the tap till tha
 does it ageän.
 Theer's thy hennemy, man, an' I knaws,
 as knaws tha sa well,
 That, if tha seeäs 'im an' smells 'im tha'll
 foller 'im slick into Hell.'

XII

'Naäy,' says I, 'fur I weänt goä sniffin'
 about the tap.'
 'Weänt tha?' she says, an' mysen I
 thowt i' mysen 'mayhap.'
 'Noä': an' I started awaäy like a shot,
 an' down to the Hinn,
 An' I browt what tha seeäs stannin' theer,
 yon big black bottle o' gin.

XIII

'That caps owt,'² says Sally, an' saw she
 begins to cry,
 But I puts it inter 'er 'ands an' I says to
 'er, 'Sally,' says I,
 'Stan' 'im theer i' the naäme o' the Lord
 an' the power ov 'is Graäce,
 Stan' 'im theer, fur I'll looök my hennemy
 straït i' the faäce,

¹ I'll uphold it.² That's beyond everything.

Stan 'im theer i' the winder, an' let ma
looök at 'im then,
'E seeäms naw moor nor watter, an' 'e's
the Divil's oän sen.'

XIV

An' I wur down i' tha mouth, couldn't do
naw work an' all,
Nasty an' snaggy an' shaäky, an' poonch'd
my 'and wi' the hawl,
But she wur a power o' coomfut, an'
sattled 'ersen o' my knee,
An' coäxd an' coodled me oop till ageän
I feel'd mysen free.

XV

An' Sally she tell'd it about, an' foälk
stood a-gawmin' ¹ in,
As thaw it wur summat bewitch'd istsed
of a quart o' gin;
An' some on 'em said it wur watter—an'
I wur chousin' the wife,
Fur I couldn't 'owd 'ands off gin, wur it
nobbut to säave my life;
An' blacksmith 'e strips me the thick ov
'is airm, an' 'e shaws it to me,
'Feäl thou this! thou can't graw this
upo' watter!' says he.
An' Doctor 'e calls o' Sunday an' just as
candles was lit,
'Thou möänt do it,' he says, 'tha mun
breäk 'im off bit by bit.'
'Thou'rt but a Methody-man,' says Par-
son, and laäys down 'is 'at,
An' 'e points to the bottle o' gin, 'but I
respecks tha fur that';
An' Squire, his oän very sen, walks down
fro' the 'All to see,
An' 'e spansk 'is 'and into mine, 'fur I
respecks tha,' says 'e;
An' coostom ageän draw'd in like a wind
fro' far an' wide,
And browt me the booöts to be cobbled
fro' hafe the coontryside.

XVI

An' theer 'e stans an' theer 'e shall stan
to my dying daäy;

¹ Staring vacantly.

I 'a gotten to loov 'im ageän in anoother
kind of a waäy,
Proud on 'im, like, my lad, an' I keeäps
'im cleän an' bright,
Loovs 'im, an' roobs 'im, an' doosts 'im,
an' puts 'im back i' the light.

XVII

Wouldn't a pint 'a sarved as well as a
quart? Naw doubt:
But I liked a bigger feller to fight wi' an'
fowt it out.
Fine an' meller 'e mun be by this, if I
cared to taäste,
But I möänt, my lad, and I weänt, fur
I'd feäl mysen cleän disgräaced.

XVIII

An' once I said to the Missis, 'My lass,
when I cooms to die,
Smash the bottle to smithers, the Divil's
in 'im,' said I.
But arter I chaänged my mind, an' if
Sally be ieft aloän,
I'll hev 'im a-buried wi'mma an' taäke
'im afoor the Throän.

XIX

Coom thou 'eer—yon laädy a-steppin'
along the streeät,
Doesn't tha know 'er—sa pratty, an' feät,
an' neät, an' sweät?
Look at the cloäths on 'er back, thebbe
ammmost spick-span-new,
An' Tommy's faäce be as fresh as a codlin
wesh'd i' the dew.

XX

'Ere be our Sally an' Tommy, an' we be
a-goin to dine,
Baäcon an' taätes, an' a beslings pud-
din' ¹ an' Adam's wine;
But if tha wants ony grog tha mun goä
fur it down to the Hinn,
Fur I weänt shed a drop on 'is blood,
noä, not fur Sally's oän kin.

¹ A pudding made with the first milk of the cow
after calving.

THE REVENGE

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET

I

AT FLORES in the Azores Sir Richard
Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came
flying from far away :
'Spanish ships of war at sea ! we have
sighted fifty-three !'
Then sware Lord Thomas Howard :
'Fore God I am no coward ;
But I cannot meet them here, for my
ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must
fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line ; can we
fight with fifty-three ?'

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville : 'I
know you are no coward ;
You fly them for a moment to fight with
them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are
lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left
them, my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devil-
doms of Spain.'

III

So Lord Howard past away with five
ships of war that day,
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent
summer heaven ;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick
men from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down
below ;
For we brought them all aboard,
And they blest him in their pain, that they
were not left to Spain,
To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the
glory of the Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work
the ship and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the
Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon
the weather bow.
'Shall we fight or shall we fly ?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die !
There'll be little of us left by the time
this sun be set.'
And Sir Richard said again : 'We be all
good English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the
children of the devil,
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or
devil yet.'

V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and
we roar'd a hurrah, and so
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the
heart of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and
her ninety sick below ;
For half of their fleet to the right and
half to the left were seen,
And the little Revenge ran on thro' the
long sea-lane between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down
from their decks and laugh'd,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at
the mad little craft
Running on and on, till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Philip that,
of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with
her yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we
stay'd.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung
above us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,

Four galleons drew away
 From the Spanish fleet that day,
 And two upon the larboard and two upon
 the starboard lay,
 And the battle-thunder broke from them
 all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she be-
 thought herself and went
 Having that within her womb that had
 left her ill content ;
 And the rest they came aboard us, and
 they fought us hand to hand,
 For a dozen times they came with their
 pikes and musqueteers,
 And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a
 dog that shakes his ears
 When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars
 came out far over the summer sea,
 But never a moment ceased the fight of
 the one and the fifty-three.
 Ship after ship, the whole night long,
 their high-built galleons came,
 Ship after ship, the whole night long,
 with her battle-thunder and flame ;
 Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew
 back with her dead and her shame.
 For some were sunk and many were shat-
 ter'd, and so could fight us no
 more—
 God of battles, was ever a battle like this
 in the world before ?

X

For he said ' Fight on ! fight on ! '
 Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck ;
 And it chanced that, when half of the
 short summer night was gone,
 With a grisly wound to be drest he had
 left the deck,
 But a bullet struck him that was dressing
 it suddenly dead,
 And himself he was wounded again in the
 side and the head,
 And he said ' Fight on ! fight on ! '

XI

And the night went down, and the sun
 smiled out far over the summer sea,
 And the Spanish fleet with broken sides
 lay round us all in a ring ;
 But they dared not touch us again, for
 they fear'd that we still could sting,
 So they watch'd what the end would be.
 And we had not fought them in vain,
 But in perilous plight were we,
 Seeing forty of our poor hundred were
 slain,
 And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
 In the crash of the cannonades and the
 desperate strife ;
 And the sick men down in the hold were
 most of them stark and cold,
 And the pikes were all broken or bent,
 and the powder was all of it spent ;
 And the masts and the rigging were lying
 over the side ;
 But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
 ' We have fought such a fight for a day
 and a night
 As may never be fought again !
 We have won great glory, my men !
 And a day less or more
 At sea or ashore,
 We die—does it matter when ?
 Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink
 her, split her in twain !
 Fall into the hands of God, not into the
 hands of Spain ! '

XII

And the gunner said ' Ay, ay, ' but the
 seamen made reply :
 ' We have children, we have wives,
 And the Lord hath spared our lives.
 We will make the Spaniard promise, if
 we yield, to let us go ;
 We shall live to fight again and to strike
 another blow.'
 And the lion there lay dying, and they
 yielded to the foe.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their
 flagship bore him then,

Where they laid him by the mast, old
 Sir Richard caught at last,
 And they praised him to his face with
 their courtly foreign grace ;
 But he rose upon their decks, and he cried :
 ' I have fought for Queen and Faith like
 a valiant man and true ;
 I have only done my duty as a man is
 bound to do :
 With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Gren-
 ville die !'
 And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had
 been so valiant and true,
 And had holden the power and glory of
 Spain so cheap
 That he dared her with one little ship
 and his English few ;
 Was he devil or man? He was devil
 for aught they knew,
 But they sank his body with honour down
 into the deep,
 And they mann'd the *Revenge* with a
 swarthier alien crew,
 And away she sail'd with her loss and
 long'd for her own ;
 When a wind from the lands they had
 ruin'd awoke from sleep,
 And the water began to heave and the
 weather to moan,
 And or ever that evening ended a great
 gale blew,
 And a wave like the wave that is raised
 by an earthquake grew,
 Till it smote on their hulls and their sails
 and their masts and their flags,
 And the whole sea plunged and fell on
 the shot-shatter'd navy of Spain,
 And the little *Revenge* herself went down
 by the island crags
 To be lost evermore in the main.

THE SISTERS

THEY have left the doors ajar ; and by
 their clash,
 And prelude on the keys, I know the
 song,

Their favourite—which I call 'The Tables
 Turned.'

Evelyn begins it 'O diviner Air.'

EVELYN

O diviner Air,
 Thro' the heat, the drowth, the dust, the
 glare,
 Far from out the west in shadowing
 showers,
 Over all the meadow baked and bare,
 Making fresh and fair
 All the bowers and the flowers,
 Fainting flowers, faded bowers,
 Over all this weary world of ours,
 Breathe, diviner Air !

A sweet voice that—you scarce could
 better that.

Now follows Edith echoing Evelyn.

EDITH

O diviner light,
 Thro' the cloud that roofs our noon with
 night,
 Thro' the blotting mist, the blinding
 showers,
 Far from out a sky for ever bright,
 Over all the woodland's flooded bowers,
 Over all the meadow's drowning flowers,
 Over all this ruin'd world of ours,
 Break, diviner light !

Marvellously like, their voices—and them-
 selves !

Tho' one is somewhat deeper than the
 other,

As one is somewhat graver than the other—
 Edith than Evelyn. Your good Uncle,
 whom

You count the father of your fortune,
 longs

For this alliance : let me ask you then,
 Which voice most takes you? for I do
 not doubt

Being a watchful parent, you are taken
 With one or other : tho' sometimes I
 fear

You may be flickering, fluttering in a
 doubt

Between the two—which must not be—
which might

Be death to one : they both are beautiful :
Evelyn is gayer, wittier, prettier, says
The common voice, if one may trust it :
she ?

No ! but the paler and the graver, Edith.
Woo her and gain her then : no waver-
ing, boy !

The graver is perhaps the one for you
Who jest and laugh so easily and so well.
For love will go by contrast, as by likes.

No sisters ever prized each other more.
Not so : their mother and her sister loved
More passionately still.

But that my best
And oldest friend, your Uncle, wishes it,
And that I know you worthy everyway
To be my son, I might, perchance, be loath
To part them, or part from them : and
yet one

Should marry, or all the broad lands in
your view

From this bay window—which our house
has held

Three hundred years—will pass collater-
ally.

My father with a child on either knee,
A hand upon the head of either child,
Smoothing their locks, as golden as his
own

Were silver, 'get them wedded' would
he say.

And once my prattling Edith ask'd him
'why ?'

Ay, why ? said he, 'for why should I go
lame ?'

Then told them of his wars, and of his
wound.

For see—this wine—the grape from
whence it flow'd

Was blackening on the slopes of Portugal,
When that brave soldier, down the terrible
ridge

Plunged in the last fierce charge at
Waterloo,

And caught the laming bullet. He left
me this,

Which yet retains a memory of its youth,
As I of mine, and my first passion.
Come !

Here's to your happy union with my child !

Yet must you change your name : no
fault of mine !

You say that you can do it as willingly
As birds make ready for their bridal-
time

By change of feather : for all that, my
boy,

Some birds are sick and sullen when they
moult.

An old and worthy name ! but mine that
stirr'd

Among our civil wars and earlier too
Among the Roses, the more venerable.

I care not for a name—no fault of mine.
Once more—a happier marriage than my
own !

You see yon Lombard poplar on the
plain.

The highway running by it leaves a breadth
Of sward to left and right, where, long
ago,

One bright May morning in a world of
song,

I lay at leisure, watching overhead
The aerial poplar wave, an amber spire.

I dozed ; I woke. An open landaulet
Whirl'd by, which, after it had past me,
show'd

Turning my way, the loveliest face on
earth.

The face of one there sitting opposite,
On whom I brought a strange unhappi-
ness,

That time I did not see.

Love at first sight
May seem—with goodly rhyme and
reason for it—

Possible—at first glimpse, and for a face
Gone in a moment—strange. Yet once,
when first

I came on lake Llanberris in the dark,
A moonless night with storm—one light-
ning-fork

Flash'd out the lake ; and tho' I loiter'd
there

The full day after, yet in retrospect
That less than momentary thunder-sketch
Of lake and mountain conquers all the day.

The Sun himself has limn'd the face
for me.

Not quite so quickly, no, nor half as well.
For look you here—the shadows are too
deep,

And like the critic's blurring comment
make

The veriest beauties of the work appear
The darkest faults : the sweet eyes frown :
the lips

Seem but a gash. My sole memorial
Of Edith—no, the other,—both indeed.

So that bright face was flash'd thro'
sense and soul

And by the poplar vanish'd—to be found
Long after, as it seem'd, beneath the tall
Tree-bowers, and those long-sweeping
beechen boughs

Of our New Forest. I was there alone :
The phantom of the whirling landaulet
For ever past me by : when one quick
peal

Of laughter drew me thro' the glimmer-
ing glades

Down to the snowlike sparkle of a cloth
On fern and foxglove. Lo, the face again,
My Rosalind in this Arden—Edith—all
One bloom of youth, health, beauty,
happiness,

And moved to merriment at a passing jest.

There one of those about her knowing
me

Call'd me to join them ; so with these I
spent

What seem'd my crowning hour, my day
of days.

I woo'd her then, nor unsuccessfully,
The worse for her, for me ! was I content ?
Ay—no, not quite ; for now and then I
thought

Laziness, vague love-longings, the bright
May,

Had made a heated haze to magnify
The charm of Edith—that a man's ideal
Is high in Heaven, and lodged with
Plato's God,

Not findable here—content, and not con-
tent,

In some such fashion as a man may be
That having had the portrait of his friend
Drawn by an artist, looks at it, and says,
' Good ! very like ! not altogether he.'

As yet I had not bound myself by
words,

Only, believing I loved Edith, made
Edith love *me*. Then came the day
when I,

Flattering myself that all my doubts were
fools

Born of the fool this Age that doubts of
all—

Not I that day of Edith's love or mine—
Had braced my purpose to declare my-
self :

I stood upon the stairs of Paradise.
The golden gates would open at a word.
I spoke it—told her of my passion, seen
And lost and found again, had got so far,
Had caught her hand, her eyelids fell—I
heard

Wheels, and a noise of welcome at the
doors—

On a sudden after two Italian years
Had set the blossom of her health again,
The younger sister, Evelyn, enter'd—
there,

There was the face, and altogether she.
The mother fell about the daughter's
neck,

The sisters closed in one another's arms,
Their people throng'd about them from
the hall,

And in the thick of question and reply
I fled the house, driven by one angel face,
And all the Furies.

I was bound to her ;
I could not free myself in honour—bound
Not by the sounded letter of the word,
But counterpressures of the yielded hand
That timorously and faintly echoed mine,

Quick blushes, the sweet dwelling of her eyes

Upon me when she thought I did not see—

Were these not bonds? nay, nay, but could I wed her

Loving the other? do her that great wrong?

Had I not dream'd I loved her yesternorn?

Had I not known where Love, at first a fear,

Grew after marriage to full height and form?

Yet after marriage, that mock-sister there—

Brother-in-law—the fiery nearness of it—
Unlawful and disloyal brotherhood—

What end but darkness could ensue from this

For all the three? So Love and Honour jarr'd

Tho' Love and Honour join'd to raise the full

High-tide of doubt that sway'd me up and down

Advancing nor retreating.

Edith wrote :

'My mother bids me ask' (I did not tell you—

A widow with less guile than many a child.
God help the wrinkled children that are

Christ's

As well as the plump cheek—she wrought us harm,

Poor soul, not knowing) 'are you ill?' (so ran

The letter) 'you have not been here of late.

You will not find me here. At last I go
On that long-promised visit to the North.

I told your wayside story to my mother
And Evelyn. She remembers you.

Farewell.

Pray come and see my mother. Almost blind

With ever-growing cataract, yet she thinks
She sees you when she hears. Again

farewell.'

Cold words from one I had hoped to warm so far

That I could stamp my image on her heart!

'Pray come and see my mother, and farewell.'

Cold, but as welcome as free airs of heaven

After a dungeon's closeness. Selfish, strange!

What dwarfs are men! my strangled vanity

Utter'd a stifled cry—to have vext myself
And all in vain for her—cold heart or

none—

No bride for me. Yet so my path was clear

To win the sister.

Whom I woo'd and won.

For Evelyn knew not of my former suit,
Because the simple mother work'd upon

By Edith pray'd me not to whisper of it.
And Edith would be bridesmaid on the

day.

But on that day, not being all at ease,
I from the altar glancing back upon her,

Before the first 'I will' was utter'd, saw
The bridesmaid pale, statuelike, passion-

less—

'No harm, no harm' I turn'd again, and placed

My ring upon the finger of my bride.

So, when we parted, Edith spoke no word,

She wept no tear, but round my Evelyn clung

In utter silence for so long, I thought

'What, will she never set her sister free?'

We left her, happy each in each, and then,

As tho' the happiness of each in each

Were not enough, must fain have torrents,
lakes,

Hills, the great things of Nature and the fair,

To lift us as it were from commonplace,
And help us to our joy. Better have

sent

Our Edith thro' the glories of the earth,
To change with her horizon, if true Love
Were not his own imperial all-in-all.

Far off we went. My God, I would
not live
Save that I think this gross hard-seeming
world
Is our misshaping vision of the Powers
Behind the world, that make our griefs
our gains.

For on the dark night of our marriage-
day
The great Tragedian, that had quench'd
herself
In that assumption of the bridesmaid—
she
That loved me—our true Edith—her
brain broke
With over-acting, till she rose and fled
Beneath a pitiless rush of Autumn rain
To the deaf church—to be let in—to pray
Before *that* altar—so I think ; and there
They found her beating the hard Protest-
ant doors.
She died and she was buried ere we
knew.

I learnt it first. I had to speak. At
once
The bright quick smile of Evelyn, that
had sunn'd
The morning of our marriage, past away :
And on our home-return the daily want
Of Edith in the house, the garden, still
Haunted us like her ghost ; and by and
by,
Either from that necessity for talk
Which lives with blindness, or plain
innocence
Of nature, or desire that her lost child
Should earn from both the praise of
heroism,
The mother broke her promise to the
dead,
And told the living daughter with what
love
Edith had welcomed my brief wooing of
her,
And all her sweet self-sacrifice and death.

Henceforth that mystic bond betwixt
the twins—

Did I not tell you they were twins?—
prevail'd

So far that no caress could win my wife
Back to that passionate answer of full
heart

I had from her at first. Not that her love,
Tho' scarce as great as Edith's power of
love,

Had lessen'd, but the mother's garrulous
wail

For ever woke the unhappy Past again,
Till that dead bridesmaid, meant to be
my bride,

Put forth cold hands between us, and I
fear'd

The very fountains of her life were
chill'd ;

So took her thence, and brought her
here, and here

She bore a child, whom reverently we
call'd

Edith ; and in the second year was born
A second—this I named from her own
self,

Evelyn ; then two weeks—no more—she
joined,

In and beyond the grave, that one she
loved.

Now in this quiet of declining life,
Thro' dreams by night and trances of the
day,

The sisters glide about me hand in hand,
Both beautiful alike, nor can I tell

One from the other, no, nor care to tell
One from the other, only know they
come,

They smile upon me, till, remembering
all

The love they both have borne me, and
the love

I bore them both—divided as I am
From either by the stillness of the grave—
I know not which of these I love the
best.

But *you* love Edith ; and her own true
eyes

Are traitors to her ; our quick Evelyn—

The merrier, prettier, wittier, as they
talk,
And not without good reason, my good
son—
Is yet untouch'd : and I that hold them
both
Dearest of all things—well, I am not
sure—
But if there lie a preference eitherway,
And in the rich vocabulary of Love
'Most dearest' be a true superlative—
I think I likewise love your Edith most.

THE VILLAGE WIFE ; OR, THE ENTAIL¹

I

'OUSE-KEEPER sent tha my lass, fur New
Squire coom'd last night.
Butter an' heggs—yis—yis. I'll goä wi'
tha back : all right ;
Butter I warrants be prime, an' I war-
rants the heggs be as well,
Hafe a pint o' milk runs out when ya
breaks the shell.

II

Sit thysen down fur a bit : hev a glass o'
cowslip wine !
I liked the owd Squire an' 'is gells as
thaw they was gells o' mine,
Fur then we was all es one, the Squire
an' 'is darters an' me,
Hall but Miss Annie, the heldest, I niver
not took to she :
But Nelly, the last of the cletch,² I liked
'er the fust on 'em all,
Fur hoffens we talkt o' my darter es died
o' the fever at fall :
An' I thowt 'twur the will o' the Lord, but
Miss Annie she said it wur draäins,
Fur she hedn't naw coomfut in 'er, an'
arn'd naw thanks fur 'er paäins.
Eh ! thebbe all wi' the Lord my childer,
I han't gotten none !
Sa new Squire's coom'd wi' 'is taäil in 'is
'and, an' owd Squire's gone.

¹ See note to 'Northern Cobbler.'

² A brood of chickens.

III

Fur 'staäte be i' taäil, my lass : tha dosn'
knew what that be ?
But I knows the law, I does, for the
lawyer ha tow'd it me.
'When theer's naw 'eä'd to a 'Ouse by
the fault o' that ere maäle—
The gells they counts fur nowt, and the
next un he taäkes the taäil.'

IV

What be the next un like ? can tha tell
ony harm on 'im lass ?—
Naay sit down—naw 'urry—sa cowl !—
hev another glass !
Straänge an' cowl fur the time ! we may
happen a fall o' snaw—
Not es I cares fur to hear ony harm, but
I likes to know.
An' I 'oäps es 'e beänt boooklarn'd : but
'e dosn' not coom fro' the shere ;
We'd anew o' that wi' the Squire, an' we
haätes boooklarnin' ere.

V

Fur Squire wur a Varsity scholard, an'
niver lookt arter the land—
Whoäts o' tonups or taätes—'e 'ed hallus
a boök i' 'is 'and,
Hallus aloä i' wi' 'is boooks, thaw nigh
upo' seventy year.
An' boooks, what's boooks ? thou knows
thebbe naither 'ere nor theer.

VI

An' the gells, they hedn't naw taäils, an'
the lawyer he tow'd it me
That 'is taäil were soä tied up es he
couldn't cut down a tree !
'Drat the trees,' says I, to be sewer I
haätes 'em, my lass,
Fur we puts the muck o' the land an'
they sucks the muck fro' the grass.

VII

An' Squire wur hallus a-smilin', an' gied
to the tramps goin' by—
An' all o' the wust i' the parish—wi'
hoffens a drop in 'is eye.

An' ivry darter o' Squire's hed her awn
 -ridin-erse to 'ersen,
 An' they rampaged about wi' their grooms,
 an' was 'untin' arter the men,
 An' hallus a-dallackt¹ an' dizen'd out,
 an' a-buyin' new cloäthes,
 While 'e sit like a g-eät glimmer-gowk²
 wi' 'is glasses athurt 'is noäse,
 An' 'is noäse sa grufted wi' snuff es it
 couldn't be scroob'd awaäy,
 Fur atween 'is readin' an' writin' 'e snifft
 up a box in a daäy,
 An' 'e niver runn'd arter the fox, nor
 arter the birds wi' 'is gun,
 An' 'e niver not shot one 'are, but 'e
 leäved it to Charlie 'is son,
 An' 'e niver not fish'd 'is awn ponds, but
 Charlie 'e cotch'd the pike,
 For 'e warn't not burn to the land, an' 'e
 didn't take kind to it like ;
 But I eärs es 'e'd gie fur a howry³ owd
 book thutty pound an' moor,
 An' 'e'd wrote an owd book, his awn sen,
 sa Iknew'd es 'e'd coom to be poor ;
 An' 'e gied—I be fear'd fur to tell tha 'ow
 much—fur an owd scratted stoän,
 An' 'e digg'd up a loomp i' the land an'
 'e got a brown pot an' a boän,
 An' 'e bowt owd money, es wöaldn't goä,
 wi' good gowd o' the Queen,
 An' 'e bowt little statutes äll-naäkt an'
 which was a shaame to be seen ;
 But 'e niver loökt ower a bill, nor 'e
 niver not seed to owt,
 An' 'e niver knawd nowt but booöks, an'
 booöks, asthou knaws, beänt nowt.

VIII

But owd Squire's laädy es long es she
 lived she kep 'em all clear,
 Thaw es long es she lived I niver hed
 none of 'er darters 'ere ;
 But arter she died we was all es one, the
 childer an' me,
 An' sarvints runn'd in an' out, an' offens
 we hed 'em to tea.
 Lawk ! 'ow I laugh'd when the lasses 'ud
 talk o' their Missis's waäys,

¹ Overdrest in gay colours.² Owl.³ Filthy.

An' the Missis talk'd o' the lasses.—I'll
 tell tha some o' these daäys.
 Hoänly Miss Annie were saw stuck oop,
 like 'er mother afoor—
 'Er an' 'er blessed darter—they niver
 darken'd my door.

IX

An' Squire 'e smiled an' 'e smiled till 'e'd
 gotten a fright at last,
 An' 'e calls fur 'is son, fur the 'turney's
 letters they foller'd sa fast ;
 But Squire wur afear'd o' 'is son, an' 'e
 says to 'im, meek as a mouse,
 'Lad, thou mun cut off thy taäil, or the
 gells 'ull goä to the 'Ouse,
 Fur I finds es I be that i' debt, es I 'oäps
 es thou'll 'elp me a bit,
 An' if thou'll 'gree to cut off thy taäil I
 may saäve mysen yit.'

X

But Charlie 'e sets back 'is ears, an' 'e
 sweärs, an' 'e says to 'im 'Noa.
 I've gotten the 'staäte by the taäil an'
 be dang'd if I iver let goa !
 Coom ! coom ! feyther,' 'e says, 'why
 shouldn't thy booöks be sowd ?
 I hears es soom o' thy booöks mebbe
 worth their weight i' gowd.'

XI

Heäps an' heäps o' booöks, I ha' see'd
 'em, belong'd to the Squire,
 But the lasses 'ed teärd out leäves i' the
 middle to kindle the fire ;
 Sa moäst on 'is owd big booöks fetch'd
 nigh to nowt at the saäle,
 And Squire were at Charlie ageän to git
 'im to cut off 'is taäil.

XII

Ya wouldn't find Charlie's likes—'e were
 that outdacious at 'oäm,
 Not thaw ya went fur to raäke out Hell
 wi' a small-tooth coämb—
 Droonk wi' the Quoloty's wine, an' droonk
 wi' the farmer's älle,
 Mad wi' the lasses an' äll—an' 'e wouldn't
 cut off the taäil.

XIII

Thou's coom'd oop by the beck; and a
 thurn be a-grawin' theer,
 I niver ha seed it sa white wi' the Maäy
 es I see'd it to-year—
 Theerabouts Charlie joompt—and it gied
 me a scare tother night,
 Fur I thowt it wur Charlie's ghoäst i'
 the derk, fur it looökt sa white.
 'Billy,' says 'e, 'hev a joomp!—thaw
 the banks o' the beck be sa high,
 Fur he ca'd 'is 'erse Billy-rough-un, thaw
 niver a hair wur awry;
 But Billy fell bakkuds o' Charlie, an'
 Charlie 'e brok 'is neck,
 Sa theer wur a hend o' the taäil, fur 'e
 lost 'is taäil i' the beck.

XIV

Sa 'is taäil wur lost an' 'is booöks wur
 gone an' 'is boy wur deäd,
 An' Squire 'e smiled an' 'e smiled, but 'e
 niver not lift oop 'is 'eäd:
 Hallus a soft un Squire! an' 'e smiled,
 fur 'e hedn't naw friend,
 Sa feyther an' son was buried together,
 an' this wur the hend.

XV

An' Parson as hesn't the call, nor the
 mooney, but hes the pride,
 'E reäds of a sewer an' sartan 'oäp o' the
 tother side;
 But I beänt that sewer es the Lord, how-
 siver they praäy'd an' praäy'd,
 Lets them inter 'eaven eäsy es leäves their
 debts to be paäid.
 Siver the mou'ds rattled down upo' poor
 owd Squire i' the wood,
 An' I cried along wi' the gells, fur they
 weänt niver coom to naw good.

XVI

Fur Molly the long un she walkt awaäy
 wi' a hofferer lad,
 An' nawbody 'eärd on 'er sin, sa o' coorse
 she be gone to the bad!
 An' Lucy wur laäme o' one leg, sweet-
 'arts she niver 'ed none—

Straänge an' unheppen¹ Miss Lucy! we
 naämed her 'Dot an' gaw one!
 An' Hetty wur weak i' the hattics, wi'out
 ony harm i' the legs,
 An' the fever 'ed baäked Jinny's 'eäd as
 bald as one o' them heggs,
 An' Nelly wur up fro' the craädle as big
 i' the mouth as a cow,
 An' saw she mun hammergrate,² lass, or
 she weänt git a maäte onyhow!
 An' es for Miss Annie es call'd me afoor
 my awn foälks to my faäce
 'A hignorant village wife as 'ud hev to
 be larn'd her awn plaäce,'
 Hes fur Miss Hannie the heldest hes now
 be a-grawin' sa howd,
 I knaws that mooch o' sheä, es it beänt
 not fit to be tow'd!

XVII

Sa I didn't not taäke it kindly ov owd
 Miss Annie to saäy
 Es I should be talkin ageän 'em, es soon
 es they went awaäy,
 Fur, lawks! 'ow I cried when they went,
 an' our Nelly she gied me 'er 'and,
 Fur I'd ha done owt for the Squire an' 'is
 gells es belong'd to the land;
 Booöks, es I said afoor, thebbe neyther
 'ere nor theer!
 But I sarved 'em wi' butter an' heggs fur
 huppuds o' twenty year.

XVIII

An' they hallus paäid what I hax'd, sa I
 hallus deal'd wi' the Hall,
 An' they knaw'd what butter wur, an' they
 knaw'd what a hegg wur an' all;
 Hugger - mugger they lived, but they
 wasn't that eäsy to pleäse,
 Till I gied 'em Hinjian curn, an' they
 laäid big heggs es tha secas;
 An' I niver puts saäme³ i' my butter,
 they does it at Willis's farm,
 Taäste another drop o' the wine—tweänt
 do tha naw harm.

¹ Ungainly, awkward.² Emigrate.³ Lard.

XIX

Sa new Squire's coom'd wi' 'is taäl in 'is
 'and, an' owd Squire's gone;
 I heard 'im a roomlin' by, but arter my
 nightcap wur on;
 Sa I han't clapt eyes on 'im yit, fur he
 coom'd last night sa laäte—
 Pluksh!!!¹ the hens i' the peäs! why
 didn't tha hesp the gaäte?

IN THE CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL

EMMIE

I

OUR doctor had call'd in another, I never
 had seen him before,
 But he sent a chill to my heart when I
 saw him come in at the door,
 Fresh from the surgery-schools of France
 and of other lands—
 Harsh red hair, big voice, big chest, big
 merciless hands!
 Wonderful cures he had done, O yes, but
 they said too of him
 He was happier using the knife than in
 trying to save the limb,
 And that I can well believe, for he look'd
 so coarse and so red,
 I could think he was one of those who
 would break their jests on the dead,
 And mangle the living dog that had loved
 him and fawn'd at his knee—
 Drench'd with the hellish oorali—that
 ever such things should be!

II

Here was a boy—I am sure that some of
 our children would die
 But for the voice of Love, and the smile,
 and the comforting eye—
 Here was a boy in the ward, every bone
 seem'd out of its place—
 Caught in a mill and crush'd—it was all
 but a hopeless case:

¹ A cry accompanied by a clapping of hands to scare trespassing fowl.

And he handled him gently enough; but
 his voice and his face were not kind,
 And it was but a hopeless case, he had
 seen it and made up his mind,
 And he said to me roughly 'The lad will
 need little more of your care.'
 'All the more need,' I told him, 'to seek
 the Lord Jesus in prayer;
 They are all his children here, and I pray
 for them all as my own':
 But he turn'd to me, 'Ay, good woman,
 can prayer set a broken bone?'
 Then he mutter'd half to himself, but I
 know that I heard him say
 'All very well—but the good Lord Jesus
 has had his day.'

III

HAD? has it come? It has only dawn'd.
 It will come by and by.
 O how could I serve in the wards if the
 hope of the world were a lie?
 How could I bear with the sights and the
 loathsome smells of disease
 But that He said 'Ye do it to me, when
 ye do it to these'?

IV

So he went. And we past to this ward
 where the younger children are laid:
 Here is the cot of our orphan, our dar-
 ling, our meek little maid;
 Empty you see just now! We have lost
 her who loved her so much—
 Patient of pain tho' as quick as a sensitive
 plant to the touch;
 Hers was the prettiest prattle, it often
 moved me to tears,
 Hers was the gratefullest heart I have
 found in a child of her years—
 Nay you remember our Emmie; you used
 to send her the flowers;
 How she would smile at 'em, play with
 'em, talk to 'em hours after hours!
 They that can wander at will where the
 works of the Lord are reveal'd
 Little guess what joy can be got from a
 cowslip out of the field;
 Flowers to these 'spirits in prison' are all
 they can know of the spring,

They freshen and sweeten the wards like
the waft of an Angel's wing ;
And she lay with a flower in one hand and
her thin hands crost on her breast—
Wan, but as pretty as heart can desire,
and we thought her at rest,
Quietly sleeping—so quiet, our doctor
said ' Poor little dear,
Nurse, I must do it to-morrow ; she'll
never live thro' it, I fear.'

V

I walk'd with our kindly old doctor as
far as the head of the stair,
Then I return'd to the ward ; the child
didn't see I was there.

VI

Never since I was nurse, had I been so
grieved and so vexed !
Emmie had heard him. Softly she call'd
from her cot to the next,
' He says I shall never live thro' it, O
Annie, what shall I do ?'
Annie consider'd. ' If I,' said the wise
little Annie, ' was you,
I should cry to the dear Lord Jesus to
help me, for, Emmie, you see,
It's all in the picture there : " Little
children should come to me."'
(Meaning the print that you gave us, I
find that it always can please
Our children, the dear Lord Jesus with
children about his knees.)
' Yes, and I will,' said Emmie, ' but then
if I call to the Lord,
How should he know that it's me ? such
a lot of beds in the ward !'
That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she
consider'd and said :
' Emmie, you put out your arms, and you
leave 'em outside on the bed—
The Lord has so *much* to see to ! but,
Emmie, you tell it him plain,
It's the little girl with her arms lying out
on the counterpane.'

VII

I had sat three nights by the child—I
could not watch her for four—

My brain had begun to reel—I felt I
could do it no more.
That was my sleeping-night, but I thought
that it never would pass.
There was a thunderclap once, and a
clatter of hail on the glass,
And there was a phantom cry that I heard
as I tost about,
The motherless bleat of a lamb in the
storm and the darkness without ;
My sleep was broken besides with dreams
of the dreadful knife
And fears for our delicate Emmie who
scarce would escape with her life ;
Then in the gray of the morning it seem'd
she stood by me and smiled,
And the doctor came at his hour, and we
went to see to the child.

VIII

He had brought his ghastly tools : we
believed her asleep again—
Her dear, long, lean, little arms lying out
on the counterpane ;
Say that His day is done ! Ah why should
we care what they say ?
The Lord of the children had heard her,
and Emmie had past away.

DEDICATORY POEM TO THE PRINCESS ALICE

DEAD PRINCESS, living Power, if that,
which lived
True life, live on—and if the fatal kiss,
Born of true life and love, divorce thee
not
From earthly love and life—if what we call
The spirit flash not all at once from out
This shadow into Substance—then perhaps
The mellow'd murmur of the people's
praise
From thine own State, and all our
breadth of realm,
Where Love and Longing dress thy deeds
in light,
Ascends to thee ; and this March morn
that sees
Thy Soldier-brother's bridal orange-bloom

Break thro' the yews and cypress of thy
grave,
And thine Imperial mother smile again,
May send one ray to thee ! and who can
tell—
Thou—England's England-loving daugh-
ter—thou
Dying so English thou wouldst have her
flag
Borne on thy coffin—where is he can
swear
But that some broken gleam from our
poor earth
May touch thee, while remembering thee,
I lay
At thy pale feet this ballad of the deeds
Of England, and her banner in the East ?

THE DEFENCE OF LUCKNOW

I

BANNER of England, not for a season, O
banner of Britain, hast thou
Floated in conquering battle or flapt to
the battle-cry !
Never with mightier glory than when we
had rear'd thee on high
Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly
siege of Lucknow—
Shot thro' the staff or the halyard, but
ever we raised thee anew,
And ever upon the topmost roof our
banner of England blew.

II

Frail were the works that defended the
hold that we held with our lives—
Women and children among us, God help
them, our children and wives !
Hold it we might—and for fifteen days
or for twenty at most.
'Never surrender, I charge you, but
every man die at his post !'
Voice of the dead whom we loved, our
Lawrence the best of the brave :
Cold were his brows when we kiss'd
him—we laid him that night in
his grave.

'Every man die at his post !' and there
hail'd on our houses and halls
Death from their rifle-bullets, and death
from their cannon-balls,
Death in our innermost chamber, and
death at our slight barricade,
Death while we stood with the musket, and
death while we stooped to the spade,
Death to the dying, and wounds to the
wounded, for often there fell,
Striking the hospital wall, crashing thro'
it, their shot and their shell,
Death—for their spies were among us, their
marksmen were told of our best,
So that the brute bullet broke thro' the
brain that could think for the rest ;
Bullets would sing by our foreheads, and
bullets would rain at our feet—
Fire from ten thousand at once of the
rebels that girdled us round—
Death at the glimpse of a finger from
over the breadth of a street,
Death from the heights of the mosque and
the palace, and death in the ground !
Mine? yes, a mine ! Countermine ! down,
down ! and creep thro' the hole !
Keep the revolver in hand ! you can hear
him—the murderous mole !
Quiet, ah ! quiet—wait till the point of
the pickaxe be thro' !
Click with the pick, coming nearer and
nearer again than before—
Now let it speak, and you fire, and the
dark pioneer is no more ;
And ever upon the topmost roof our
banner of England blew !

III

Ay, but the foe sprung his mine many
times, and it chanced on a day
Soon as the blast of that underground
thunderclap echo'd away,
Dark thro' the smoke and the sulphur like
so many fiends in their hell—
Cannon-shot, musket-shot, volley on
volley, and yell upon yell—
Fiercely on all the defences our myriad
enemy fell.
What have they done ? where is it ? Out
yonder. Guard the Redan !

Storm at the Water-gate ! storm at the
 Bailey-gate ! storm, and it ran
 Surging and swaying all round us, as
 ocean on every side
 Plunges and heaves at a bank that is
 daily devour'd by the tide—
 So many thousands that if they be bold
 enough, who shall escape ?
 Kill or be kill'd, live or die, they shall
 know we are soldiers and men !
 Ready ! take aim at their leaders—their
 masses are gapp'd with our grape—
 Backward they reel like the wave, like
 the wave flinging forward again,
 Flying and foil'd at the last by the hand-
 ful they could not subdue ;
 And ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner of England blew.

IV

Handful of men as we were, we were
 English in heart and in limb,
 Strong with the strength of the race to
 command, to obey, to endure,
 Each of us fought as if hope for the garri-
 son hung but on him ;
 Still—could we watch at all points ? we
 were every day fewer and fewer.
 There was a whisper among us, but only
 a whisper that past :
 ' Children and wives—if the tigers leap
 into the fold unawares—
 Every man die at his post—and the foe
 may outlive us at last—
 Better to fall by the hands that they love,
 than to fall into theirs !'
 Roar upon roar in a moment two mines
 by the enemy sprung
 Clove into perilous chasms our walls and
 our poor palisades.
 Rifleman, true is your heart, but be sure
 that your hand be as true !
 Sharp is the fire of assault, better aimed
 are your flank fusillades—
 Twice do we hurl them to earth from the
 ladders to which they had clung,
 Twice from the ditch where they shelter
 we drive them with hand-grenades ;
 And ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner of England blew.

V

Then on another wild morning another
 wild earthquake out-tore
 Clean from our lines of defence ten or
 twelve good paces or more.
 Rifleman, high on the roof, hidden there
 from the light of the sun—
 One has leapt up on the breach, crying
 out : ' Follow me, follow me !'—
 Mark him—he falls ! then another, and
him too, and down goes he.
 Had they been bold enough then, who
 can tell but the traitors had won ?
 Boardings and rafters and doors—an em-
 brasure ! make way for the gun !
 Now double-charge it with grape ! It is
 charged and we fire, and they
 run.
 Praise to our Indian brothers, and let the
 dark face have his due !
 Thanks to the kindly dark faces who
 fought with us, faithful and few,
 Fought with the bravest among us, and
 drove them, and smote them, and
 slew,
 That ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner in India blew.

VI

Men will forget what we suffer and not
 what we do. We can fight !
 But to be soldier all day and be sentinel
 all thro' the night—
 Ever the mine and assault, our sallies,
 their lying alarms,
 Bugles and drums in the darkness, and
 shoutings and soundings to arms,
 Ever the labour of fifty that had to be
 done by five,
 Ever the marvel among us that one should
 be left alive,
 Ever the day with its traitorous death
 from the loopholes around,
 Ever the night with its coffinless corpse
 to be laid in the ground,
 Heat like the mouth of a hell, or a deluge
 of cataract skies,
 Stench of old offal decaying, and infinite
 torment of flies,

Thoughts of the breezes of May blowing
 over an English field,
 Cholera, scurvy, and fever, the wound
 that *would* not be heal'd,
 Lopping away of the limb by the pitiful-
 pitiless knife,—
 Torture and trouble in vain,—for it never
 could save us a life.
 Valour of delicate women who tended the
 hospital bed,
 Horror of women in travail among the
 dying and dead,
 Grief for our perishing children, and
 never a moment for grief,
 Toil and ineffable weariness, faltering
 hopes of relief,
 Havelock baffled, or beaten, or butcher'd
 for all that we knew—
 Then day and night, day and night, coming
 down on the still-shatter'd walls
 Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands
 of cannon-balls—
 But ever upon the topmost roof our
 banner of England blew.

VII

Hark cannonade, fusillade! is it true what
 was told by the scout,
 Outram and Havelock breaking their way
 through the fell mutineers?
 Surely the pibroch of Europe is ringing
 again in our ears!
 All on a sudden the garrison utter a jubi-
 lant shout,
 Havelock's glorious Highlanders answer
 with conquering cheers,
 Sick from the hospital echo them, women
 and children come out,
 Blessing the wholesome white faces of
 Havelock's good fusileers,
 Kissing the war-harden'd hand of the
 Highlander wet with their tears!
 Dance to the pibroch!—saved! we are
 saved!—is it you? is it you?
 Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved
 by the blessing of Heaven!
 'Hold it for fifteen days!' we have held
 it for eighty-seven!
 And ever aloft on the palace roof the old
 banner of England blew.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE,
LORD COBHAM

(IN WALES)

My friend should meet me somewhere
 hereabout
 To take me to that hiding in the hills.

I have broke their cage, no gilded one,
 I trow—
 I read no more the prisoner's mute wail
 Scribbled or carved upon the pitiless stone;
 I find hard rocks, hard life, hard cheer, or
 none,
 For I am emptier than a friar's brains;
 But God is with me in this wilderness,
 These wet black passes and foam-churn-
 ing chasms—
 And God's free air, and hope of better
 things.

I would I knew their speech; not now
 to glean,
 Not now—I hope to do it—some scatter'd
 ears,
 Some ears for Christ in this wild field of
 Wales—
 But, bread, merely for bread. This
 tongue that wagg'd
 They said with such heretical arrogance
 Against the proud archbishop Arundel—
 So much God's cause was fluent in it—is
 here
 But as a Latin Bible to the crowd;
 'Bara!'—what use? The Shepherd,
 when I speak,
 Vailing a sudden eyelid with his hard
 'Dim Saesneg' passes, wroth at things
 of old—
 No fault of mine. Had he God's word
 in Welsh
 He might be kindlier: happily come the
 day!

Not least art thou, thou little Beth-
 lehem
 In Judah, for in thee the Lord was born;
 Nor thou in Britain, little Lutterworth,
 Least, for in thee the word was born again.

Heaven - sweet Evangel, ever - living
word,
Who whilome spakest to the South in
Greek
About the soft Mediterranean shores,
And then in Latin to the Latin crowd,
As good need was—thou hast come to
talk our isle.
Hereafter thou, fulfilling Pentecost,
Must learn to use the tongues of all the
world.

Yet art thou thine own witness that thou
bringest

Not peace, a sword, a fire.

What did he say,

My frighted Wiclif - preacher whom I
crost

In flying hither? that one night a crowd
Throng'd the waste field about the city
gates:

The king was on them suddenly with a
host.

Why there? they came to hear their
preacher. Then

Some cried on Cobham, on the good
Lord Cobham;

Ay, for they love me! but the king—nor
voice

Nor finger raised against him—took and
hang'd,

Took, hang'd and burnt—how many—
thirty-nine—

Call'd it rebellion—hang'd, poor friends,
as rebels

And burn'd alive as heretics! for your
Priest

Labels—to take the king along with
him—

All heresy, treason: but to call men
traitors

May make men traitors.

Rose of Lancaster,

Red in thy birth, redder with household
war,

Now reddest with the blood of holy men,
Redder to be, red rose of Lancaster—

If somewhere in the North, as Rumour
sang

Fluttering the hawks of this crown-lust-
ing line—

By firth and loch thy silver sister grow,¹
That were my rose, there my allegiance
due.

Self-starved, they say—nay, murder'd,
doubtless dead.

So to this king I cleaved: my friend was
he,

Once my fast friend: I would have given
my life

To help his own from scathe, a thousand
lives

To save his soul. He might have come
to learn

Our Wiclif's learning: but the worldly
Priests

Who fear the king's hard common-sense
should find

What rotten piles uphold their mason-
work,

Urge him to foreign war. O had he
will'd

I might have stricken a lusty stroke for
him,

But he would not; far liever led my
friend

Back to the pure and universal church,
But he would not: whether that heirless
flaw

In his throne's title make him feel so
frail,

He leans on Antichrist; or that his mind,
So quick, so capable in soldiership,

In matters of the faith, alas the while!
More worth than all the kingdoms of
this world,

Runs in the rut, a coward to the Priest.

Burnt—good Sir Roger Acton, my
dear friend!

Burnt too, my faithful preacher, Beverley!
Lord give thou power to thy two wit-
nesses!

Lest the false faith make merry over
them!

Two—nay but thirty-nine have risen and
stand,

Dark with the smoke of human sacrifice,
Before thy light, and cry continually—

Cry—against whom?

¹ Richard II.

Him, who should bear the sword
Of Justice—what! the kingly, kindly boy;
Who took the world so easily heretofore,
My boon companion, tavern-fellow—him
Who gibed and japed—in many a merry
tale

That shook our sides—at Pardoners,
Summoners,

Friars, absolution-sellers, monkeries
And nunneries, when the wild hour and
the wine

Had set the wits aflame.

Harry of Monmouth,
Or Amurath of the East?

Better to sink
Thy fleurs-de-lys in slime again, and fling
Thy royalty back into the riotous fits
Of wine and harlotry—thy shame, and
mine,

Thy comrade—than to persecute the
Lord,

And play the Saul that never will be Paul.

Burnt, burnt! and while this mitred
Arundel

Dooms our unlicensed preacher to the
flame,

The mitre-sanction'd harlot draws his
clerks

Into the suburb—their hard celibacy,
Sworn to be veriest ice of pureness, molten
Into adulterous living, or such crimes
As holy Paul—a shame to speak of
them—

Among the heathen—

Sanctuary granted
To bandit, thief, assassin—yea to him
Who hacks his mother's throat—denied
to him,

Who finds the Saviour in his mother
tongue.

The Gospel, the Priest's pearl, flung
down to swine—

The swine, lay-men, lay-women, who
will come,

God willing, to outlearn the filthy friar.

Ah rather, Lord, than that thy Gospel,
meant

To course and range thro' all the world,
should be

Tether'd to these dead pillars of the
Church—

Rather than so, if thou wilt have it so,
Burst vein, snap sinew, and crack heart,
and life

Pass in the fire of Babylon! but how
long,

O Lord, how long!

My friend should meet me here.
Here is the copse, the fountain and—a
Cross!

To thee, dead wood, I bow not head nor
knees.

Rather to thee, green bosage, work of
God,

Black holly, and white-flower'd wayfar-
ing-tree!

Rather to thee, thou living water, drawn
By this good Wiclif mountain down from
heaven,

And speaking clearly in thy native
tongue—

No Latin—He that thirsteth, come and
drink!

Eh! how I anger'd Arundel asking me
To worship Holy Cross! I spread mine
arms,

God's work, I said, a cross of flesh and
blood

And holier. That was heresy. (My good
friend

By this time should be with me.)
'Images?'

'Bury them as God's truer images
Are daily buried.' 'Heresy.—Penance?'

'Fast,
Hairshirt and scourge—nay, let a man
repent,

Do penance in his heart, God hears him.'
'Heresy—

Not shriven, not saved?' 'What profits
an ill Priest

Between me and my God? I would not
spurn

Good counsel of good friends, but shrive
myself

No, not to an Apostle.' 'Heresy.'
(My friend is long in coming.) 'Pil-
grimages?'

'Drink, bagpipes, revelling, devil's-
 dances, vice.
 The poor man's money gone to fat the
 friar.
 Who reads of begging saints in Scripture?'
 —'Heresy'—
 (Hath he been here—not found me—gone
 again?
 Have I mislearnt our place of meeting?)
 'Bread—
 Bread left after the blessing?' how they
 stared,
 That was their main test-question—
 glared at me!
 'He veil'd Himself in flesh, and now He
 veils
 His flesh in bread, body and bread
 together.'
 Then rose the howl of all the cassock'd
 wolves,
 'No bread, no bread. God's body!'
 Archbishop, Bishop,
 Priors, Canons, Friars, bellringers,
 Parish-clerks—
 'No bread, no bread!'—'Authority of
 the Church,
 Power of the keys!'—Then I, God help
 me, I
 So mock'd, so spurn'd, so baited two
 whole days—
 I lost myself and fell from evenness,
 And rail'd at all the Popes, that ever since
 Sylvester shed the venom of world-wealth
 Into the church, had only prov'n them-
 selves
 Poisoners, murderers. Well—God par-
 don all—
 Me, them, and all the world—yea, that
 proud Priest,
 That mock-meek mouth of utter Anti-
 christ,
 That traitor to King Richard and the
 truth,
 Who rose and doom'd me to the fire.
 Amen!
 Nay, I can burn, so that the Lord of life
 Be by me in my death.
 Those three! the fourth
 Was like the Son of God! Not burnt
 were they.

On *them* the smell of burning had not
 past.
 That was a miracle to convert the king.
 These Pharisees, this Caiaphas-Arundel
 What miracle could turn? *He* here
 again,
He thwarting their traditions of Him-
 self,
He would be found a heretic to Himself,
 And doom'd to burn alive.
 So, caught, I burn.
 Burn? heathen men have borne as much
 as this,
 For freedom, or the sake of those they
 loved,
 Or some less cause, some cause far less
 than mine;
 For every other cause is less than mine.
 The moth will singe her wings, and
 singed return,
 Her love of light quenching her fear of
 pain—
 How now, my soul, we do not heed the
 fire?
 Faint-hearted? tut!—faint-stomach'd!
 faint as I am,
 God willing, I will burn for Him.
 Who comes?
 A thousand marks are set upon my
 head.
 Friend?—foe perhaps—a tussle for it
 then!
 Nay, but my friend. Thou art so well
 disguised,
 I knew thee not. Hast thou brought
 bread with thee?
 I have not broken bread for fifty hours.
 None? I am damn'd already by the
 Priest
 For holding there was bread where bread
 was none—
 No bread. My friends await me yonder?
 Yes.
 Lead on then. *Up* the mountain? Is
 it far?
 Not far. Climb first and reach me down
 thy hand.
 I am not like to die for lack of bread,
 For I must live to testify by fire.¹

¹ He was burnt on Christmas Day, 1417.

COLUMBUS

CHAINS, my good lord : in your raised
brows I read
Some wonder at our chamber ornaments.
We brought this iron from our isles of
gold.

Does the king know you deign to visit
him
Whom once he rose from off his throne
to greet
Before his people, like his brother king?
I saw your face that morning in the crowd.

At Barcelona—tho' you were not then
So bearded. Yes. The city deck'd
herself
To meet me, roar'd my name ; the king,
the queen
Bad me be seated, speak, and tell them all
The story of my voyage, and while I
spoke
The crowd's roar fell as at the 'Peace,
be still !'
And when I ceased to speak, the king,
the queen,
Sank from their thrones, and melted into
tears,
And knelt, and lifted hand and heart and
voice
In praise to God who led me thro' the
waste.
And then the great 'Laudamus' rose to
heaven.

Chains for the Admiral of the Ocean !
chains
For him who gave a new heaven, a new
earth,
As holy John had prophesied of me,
Gave glory and more empire to the kings
Of Spain than all their battles ! chains
for him
Who push'd his prows into the setting sun,
And made West East, and sail'd the
Dragon's mouth,
And came upon the Mountain of the
World,
And saw the rivers roll from Paradise !

Chains ! we are Admirals of the Ocean,
we,
We and our sons for ever. Ferdinand
Hath sign'd it and our Holy Catholic
queen—
Of the Ocean—of the Indies—Admirals
we—
Our title, which we never mean to yield,
Our guerdon not alone for what we did,
But our amends for all we might have
done—
The vast occasion of our stronger life—
Eighteen long years of waste, seven in
your Spain,
Lost, showing courts and kings a truth
the babe
Will suck in with his milk hereafter—
earth
A sphere.

Were *you* at Salamanca? No.
We fronted there the learning of all
Spain,
All their cosmogonies, their astronomies :
Guess-work *they* guess'd it, but the
golden guess
Is morning-star to the full round of truth.
No guess-work ! I was certain of my goal ;
Some thought it heresy, but that would
not hold.
King David call'd the heavens a hide, a
tent
Spread over earth, and so this earth was
flat :
Some cited old Lactantius : could it be
That trees grew downward, rain fell up-
ward, men
Walk'd like the fly on ceilings? and be-
sides,
The great Augustine wrote that none
could breathe
Within the zone of heat ; so might there
be
Two Adams, two mankinds, and that
was clean
Against God's word : thus was I beaten
back,
And chiefly to my sorrow by the Church,
And thought to turn my face from Spain,
appeal

Once more to France or England ; but
 our Queen
 Recall'd me, for at last their Highnesses
 Were half-assured this earth might be a
 sphere.

All glory to the all-blessed Trinity,
 All glory to the mother of our Lord,
 And Holy Church, from whom I never
 swerved
 Not even by one hair's-breadth of heresy,
 I have accomplish'd what I came to do.

Not yet—not all—last night a dream—
 I sail'd
 On my first voyage, harass'd by the frights
 Of my first crew, their curses and their
 groans.
 The great flame-banner borne by Tene-
 riffe,
 The compass, like an old friend false at last
 In our most need, appall'd them, and the
 wind
 Still westward, and the weedy seas—at
 length
 The landbird, and the branch with berries
 on it,
 The carven staff—and last the light, the
 light
 On Guanahani ! but I changed the name ;
 San Salvador I call'd it ; and the light
 Grew as I gazed, and brought out a broad
 sky
 Of dawning over—not those alien palms,
 The marvel of that fair new nature—not
 That Indian isle, but our most ancient
 East
 Moriah with Jerusalem ; and I saw
 The glory of the Lord flash up, and beat
 Thro' all the homely town from jasper,
 sapphire,
 Chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius,
 Chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase,
 Jacynth, and amethyst—and those twelve
 gates,
 Pearl—and I woke, and thought—death
 —I shall die—
 I am written in the Lamb's own Book
 of Life
 To walk within the glory of the Lord

Sunless and moonless, utter light—but
 no !
 The Lord had sent this bright, strange
 dream to me
 To mind me of the secret vow I made
 When Spain was waging war against
 the Moor—
 I strove myself with Spain against the
 Moor.
 There came two voices from the Sepul-
 chre,
 Two friars crying that if Spain should
 oust
 The Moslem from her limit, he, the fierce
 Soldan of Egypt, would break down and
 raze
 The blessed tomb of Christ ; whereon I
 vow'd
 That, if our Princes harken'd to my
 prayer,
 Whatever wealth I brought from that new
 world
 Should, in this old, be consecrate to lead
 A new crusade against the Saracen,
 And free the Holy Sepulchre from thrall.

Gold ? I had brought your Princes
 gold enough
 If left alone ! Being but a Genovese,
 I am handled worse than had I been a
 Moor,
 And breach'd the belting wall of Cambalu,
 And given the Great Khan's palaces to
 the Moor,
 Or clutch'd the sacred crown of Prester
 John,
 And cast it to the Moor : but *had* I
 brought
 From Solomon's now-recover'd Ophir all
 The gold that Solomon's navies carried
 home,
 Would that have gilded *me* ? Blue blood
 of Spain,
 Tho' quartering your own royal arms of
 Spain,
 I have not : blue blood and black blood
 of Spain,
 The noble and the convict of Castile,
 How'd me from Hispaniola ; for you
 know

The flies at home, that ever swarm about
And cloud the highest heads, and murmur
down

Truth in the distance—these outbuzz'd
me so

That even our prudent king, our righteous
queen—

I pray'd them being so calumniated

They would commission one of weight
and worth

To judge between my slander'd self and
me—

Fonseca my main enemy at their court,
They sent me out *his* tool, Bovadilla, one
As ignorant and impolitic as a beast—
Blockish irreverence, brainless greed—
who sack'd

My dwelling, seized upon my papers,
loosed

My captives, feed the rebels of the crown,
Sold the crown-farms for all but nothing,
gave

All but free leave for all to work the
mines,

Drove me and my good brothers home in
chains,

And gathering ruthless gold—a single
piece

Weigh'd nigh four thousand Castillanos
—so

They tell me—weigh'd him down into the
abysm—

The hurricane of the latitude on him fell,
The seas of our discovering over-roll

Him and his gold; the frailer caravel,
With what was mine, came happily to the
shore.

There was a glimmering of God's hand.

And God

Hath more than glimmer'd on me. O
my lord,

I swear to you I heard his voice between
The thunders in the black Veragua
nights,

'O soul of little faith, slow to believe!

Have I not been about thee from thy
birth?

Given thee the keys of the great Ocean-
sea?

Set thee in light till time shall be no
more?

Is it I who have deceived thee or the
world?

Endure! thou hast done so well for men,
that men

Cry out against thee: was it otherwise
With mine own Son?

And more than once in days
Of doubt and cloud and storm, when
drowning hope

Sank all but out of sight, I heard his
voice,

'Be not cast down. I lead thee by the
hand,

Fear not.' And I shall hear his voice
again—

I know that he has led me all my life,
I am not yet too old to work his will—
His voice again.

Still for all that, my lord,
I lying here bedridden and alone,
Cast off, put by, scouted by court and
king—

The first discoverer starves—his followers,
all

Flower into fortune—our world's way—
and I,

Without a roof that I can call mine own,
With scarce a coin to buy a meal withal,
And seeing what a door for scoundrel
scum

I open'd to the West, thro' which the lust,
Villany, violence, avarice, of your Spain
Pour'd in on all those happy naked isles—
Their kindly native princes slain or slaved,
Their wives and children Spanish concu-
bines,

Their innocent hospitalities quench'd in
blood,

Some dead of hunger, some beneath the
scourge,

Some over-labour'd, some by their own
hands,—

Yea, the dear mothers, crazing Nature,
kill

Their babies at the breast for hate of
Spain—

Ah God, the harmless people whom we
found
In Hispaniola's island-Paradise !
Who took us for the very Gods from
Heaven,
And we have sent them very fiends from
Hell ;
And I myself, myself not blameless, I
Could sometimes wish I had never led
the way.

Only the ghost of our great Catholic
Queen
Smiles on me, saying, 'Be thou com-
forted !
This creedless people will be brought to
Christ
And own the holy governance of Rome.'

But who could dream that we, who
bore the Cross
Thither, were excommunicated there,
For curbing crimes that scandalised the
Cross,
By him, the Catalonian Minorite,
Rome's Vicar in our Indies? who believe
These hard memorials of our truth to
Spain
Clung closer to us for a longer term
Than any friend of ours at Court? and yet
Pardon—too harsh, unjust. I am rack'd
with pains.

You see that I have hung them by my
bed,
And I will have them buried in my grave.

Sir, in that flight of ages which are
God's
Own voice to justify the dead—perchance
Spain once the most chivalric race on
earth,
Spain then the mightiest, wealthiest realm
on earth,
So made by me, may seek to unbury me,
To lay me in some shrine of this old Spain,
Or in that vaster Spain I leave to Spain.
Then some one standing by my grave
will say,
'Behold the bones of Christopher
Colon'—

'Ay, but the chains, what do *they* mean
—the chains?'—

I sorrow for that kindly child of Spain
Who then will have to answer, 'These
same chains
Bound these same bones back thro' the
Atlantic sea,
Which he unchain'd for all the world to
come.'

O Queen of Heaven who seest the souls
in Hell
And purgatory, I suffer all as much
As they do—for the moment. Stay, my
son
Is here anon : my son will speak for me
Ablier than I can in these spasms that
grind
Bone against bone. You will not. One
last word.

You move about the Court, I pray you
tell
King Ferdinand who plays with me, that
one,
Whose life has been no play with him
and his
Hidalgos—shipwrecks, famines, fevers,
fights,
Mutinies, treacheries—wink'd at, and
condoned—
That I am loyal to him till the death,
And ready—tho' our Holy Catholic
Queen,
Who fain had pledged her jewels on my
first voyage,
Whose hope was mine to spread the
Catholic faith,
Who wept with me when I return'd in
chains,
Who sits beside the blessed Virgin now,
To whom I send my prayer by night and
day—
She is gone—but you will tell the King,
that I,
Rack'd as I am with gout, and wrench'd
with pains
Gain'd in the service of His Highness,
yet
Am ready to sail forth on one last voyage.

And readier, if the King would hear, to
lead

One last crusade against the Saracen,
And save the Holy Sepulchre from
thrall.

Going? I am old and slighted: you
have dared

Somewhat perhaps in coming? my poor
thanks!

I am but an alien and a Genovese.

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

(FOUNDED ON AN IRISH LEGEND.

A.D. 700.)

I

I WAS the chief of the race—he had
stricken my father dead—

But I gather'd my fellows together, I
swore I would strike off his head.

Each of them look'd like a king, and was
noble in birth as in worth,

And each of them boasted he sprang from
the oldest race upon earth.

Each was as brave in the fight as the
bravest hero of song,

And each of them liefer had died than
have done one another a wrong.

He lived on an isle in the ocean—he
sail'd on a Friday morn—

He that had slain my father the day
before I was born.

II

And we came to the isle in the ocean,
and there on the shore was he.

But a sudden blast blew us out and away
thro' a boundless sea.

III

And we came to the Silent Isle that we
never had touch'd at before,

Where a silent ocean always broke on a
silent shore,

And the brooks glitter'd on in the light
without sound, and the long
waterfalls

Pour'd in a thunderless plunge to the base
of the mountain walls,

And the poplar and cypress unshaken by
storm flourish'd up beyond sight,

And the pine shot aloft from the crag to
an unbelievable height,

And high in the heaven above it there
flicker'd a songless lark,

And the cock couldn't crow, and the bull
couldn't low, and the dog couldn't
bark.

And round it we went, and thro' it, but
never a murmur, a breath—

It was all of it fair as life, it was all of it
quiet as death,

And we hated the beautiful Isle, for
whenever we strove to speak

Our voices were thinner and fainter than
any flittermouse-shriek;

And the men that were mighty of tongue
and could raise such a battle-cry

That a hundred who heard it would rush
on a thousand lances and die—

O they to be dumb'd by the charm!—so
fluster'd with anger were they

They almost fell on each other; but after
we sail'd away.

IV

And we came to the Isle of Shouting, we
landed, a score of wild birds

Cried from the topmost summit with
human voices and words;

Once in an hour they cried, and whenever
their voices peal'd

The steer fell down at the plow and the
harvest died from the field,

And the men dropt dead in the valleys
and half of the cattle went lame,

And the roof sank in on the hearth, and
the dwelling broke into flame;

And the shouting of these wild birds ran
into the hearts of my crew,

Till they shouted along with the shout-
ing and seized one another and
slew;

But I drew them the one from the other;
I saw that we could not stay,

And we left the dead to the birds and we
sail'd with our wounded away.

V

And we came to the Isle of Flowers :
 their breath met us out on the seas,
 For the Spring and the middle Summer
 sat each on the lap of the breeze ;
 And the red passion-flower to the cliffs,
 and the dark-blue clematis, clung,
 And starr'd with a myriad blossom the
 long convolvulus hung ;
 And the topmost spire of the mountain
 was lilies in lieu of snow,
 And the lilies like glaciers winded down,
 running out below
 Thro' the fire of the tulip and poppy, the
 blaze of gorse, and the blush
 Of millions of roses that sprang without
 leaf or a thorn from the bush ;
 And the whole isle-side flashing down
 from the peak without ever a tree
 Swept like a torrent of gems from the sky
 to the blue of the sea ;
 And we roll'd upon capes of crocus and
 vaunted our kith and our kin,
 And we wallow'd in beds of lilies, and
 chanted the triumph of Finn,
 Till each like a golden image was pollen'd
 from head to feet
 And each was as dry as a cricket, with
 thirst in the middle-day heat.
 Blossom and blossom, and promise of
 blossom, but never a fruit !
 And we hated the Flowering Isle, as we
 hated the isle that was mute,
 And we tore up the flowers by the million
 and flung them in bight and bay,
 And we left but a naked rock, and in
 anger we sail'd away.

VI

And we came to the Isle of Fruits : all
 round from the cliffs and the capes,
 Purple or amber, dangled a hundred
 fathom of grapes,
 And the warm melon lay like a little sun
 on the tawny sand,
 And the fig ran up from the beach and
 rioted over the land,
 And the mountain arose like a jewell'd
 throne thro' the fragrant air,

Glowing with all-colour'd plums and with
 golden masses of pear,
 And the crimson and scarlet of berries
 that flamed upon bine and vine,
 But in every berry and fruit was the
 poisonous pleasure of wine ;
 And the peak of the mountain was apples,
 the hugest that ever were seen,
 And they prest, as they grew, on each other,
 with hardly a leaflet between,
 And all of them redder than rosiest health
 or than utterest shame,
 And setting, when Even descended, the
 very sunset aflame ;
 And we stay'd three days, and we gorged
 and we madden'd, till every one
 drew
 His sword on his fellow to slay him, and
 ever they struck and they slew ;
 And myself, I had eaten but sparingly, and
 fought till I sunder'd the fray,
 Then I bad them remember my father's
 death, and we sail'd away.

VII

And we came to the Isle of Fire : we were
 lured by the light from afar,
 For the peak sent up one league of fire
 to the Northern Star ;
 Lured by the glare and the blare, but
 scarcely could stand upright,
 For the whole isle shudder'd and shook
 like a man in a mortal affright ;
 We were giddy besides with the fruits we
 had gorged, and so crazed that at
 last
 There were some leap'd into the fire ;
 and away we sail'd, and we past
 Over that undersea isle, where the water
 is clearer than air :
 Down we look'd : what a garden ! O
 bliss, what a Paradise there !
 Towers of a happier time, low down in
 a rainbow deep
 Silent palaces, quiet fields of eternal
 sleep !
 And three of the gentlest and best of my
 people, whate'er I could say,
 Plunged head down in the sea, and the
 Paradise trembled away.

VIII

And we came to the Bounteous Isle, where
 the heavens lean low on the land,
 And ever at dawn from the cloud glitter'd
 o'er us a sunbright hand,
 Then it open'd and dropt at the side of
 each man, as he rose from his
 rest,
 Bread enough for his need till the labour-
 less day dipt under the West ;
 And we wander'd about it and thro' it.
 O never was time so good !
 And we sang of the triumphs of Finn, and
 the boast of our ancient blood,
 And we gazed at the wandering wave as
 we sat by the gurgle of springs,
 And we chanted the songs of the Bards
 and the glories of fairy kings ;
 But at length we began to be weary, to
 sigh, and to stretch and yawn,
 Till we hated the Bounteous Isle and the
 sunbright hand of the dawn,
 For there was not an enemy near, but the
 whole green Isle was our own,
 And we took to playing at ball, and we
 took to throwing the stone,
 And we took to playing at battle, but
 that was a perilous play,
 For the passion of battle was in us, we
 slew and we sail'd away.

IX

And we past to the Isle of Witches and
 heard their musical cry—
 'Come to us, O come, come' in the
 stormy red of a sky
 Dashing the fires and the shadows of
 dawn on the beautiful shapes,
 For a wild witch naked as heaven stood
 on each of the loftiest capes,
 And a hundred ranged on the rock like
 white sea-birds in a row,
 And a hundred gamboll'd and pranced
 on the wrecks in the sand below,
 And a hundred splash'd from the ledges,
 and bosom'd the burst of the
 spray,
 But I knew we should fall on each other,
 and hastily sail'd away.

X

And we came in an evil time to the Isle
 of the Double Towers,
 One was of smooth-cut stone, one carved
 all over with flowers,
 But an earthquake always moved in the
 hollows under the dells,
 And they shock'd on each other and butted
 each other with clashing of bells,
 And the daws flew out of the Towers and
 jangled and wrangled in vain,
 And the clash and boom of the bells rang
 into the heart and the brain,
 Till the passion of battle was on us, and
 all took sides with the Towers,
 There were some for the clean-cut stone,
 there were more for the carven
 flowers,
 And the wrathful thunder of God peal'd
 over us all the day,
 For the one half slew the other, and after
 we sail'd away.

XI

And we came to the Isle of a Saint who
 had sail'd with St. Brendan of
 yore,
 He had lived ever since on the Isle and
 his winters were fifteen score,
 And his voice was low as from other
 worlds, and his eyes were sweet,
 And his white hair sank to his heels and
 his white beard fell to his feet,
 And he spake to me, 'O Maeldune, let
 be this purpose of thine !
 Remember the words of the Lord when
 he told us "Vengeance is mine!"
 His fathers have slain thy fathers in war
 or in single strife,
 Thy fathers have slain his fathers, each
 taken a life for a life,
 Thy father had slain his father, how long
 shall the murder last ?
 Go back to the Isle of Finn and suffer
 the Past to be Past.'
 And we kiss'd the fringe of his beard and
 we pray'd as we heard him pray,
 And the Holy man he assoil'd us, and
 sadly we sail'd away.

XII

And we came to the Isle we were blown
from, and thereon the shore was he,
The man that had slain my father. I
saw him and let him be.

O weary was I of the travel, the trouble,
the strife and the sin,

When I landed again, with a tithe of my
men, on the Isle of Finn.

DE PROFUNDIS

THE TWO GREETINGS

TO H. T. AUGUST 11, 1852

I

OUT of the deep, my child, out of the
deep,

Where all that was to be, in all that was,
Whirl'd for a million æons thro' the vast
Waste dawn of multitudinous - eddying
light—

Out of the deep, my child, out of the
deep,

Thro' all this changing world of change-
less law,

And every phase of ever-heightening life,
And nine long months of antenatal gloom,
With this last moon, this crescent—her
dark orb

Touch'd with earth's light—thou comest,
darling boy ;

Our own ; a babe in lineament and limb
Perfect, and prophet of the perfect man ;
Whose face and form are hers and mine
in one,

Indissolubly married like our love ;
Live, and be happy in thyself, and serve
This mortal race thy kin so well, that men
May bless thee as we bless thee, O young
life

Breaking with laughter from the dark ;
and may

The fated channel where thy motion lives
Be prosperously shaped, and sway thy
course

Along the years of haste and random youth
Unshatter'd ; then full-current thro' full
man :

And last in kindly curves, with gentlest fall,
By quiet fields, a slowly-dying power,
To that last deep where we and thou are
still.

II

I

OUT of the deep, my child, out of the
deep,

From that great deep, before our world
begins,

Whereon the Spirit of God moves as he
will—

Out of the deep, my child, out of the
deep,

From that true world within the world
we see,

Whereof our world is but the bounding
shore—

Out of the deep, Spirit, out of the deep,
With this ninth moon, that sends the
hidden sun

Down yon dark sea, thou comest, darling
boy.

II

For in the world, which is not ours, They
said

'Let us make man' and that which
should be man,

From that one light no man can look upon,
Drew to this shore lit by the suns and
moons

And all the shadows. O dear Spirit
half-lost

In thine own shadow and this fleshly sign
That thou art thou—who wailest being
born

And banish'd into mystery, and the pain
Of this divisible-indivisible world
Among the numerable-innumerable
Sun, sun, and sun, thro' finite-infinite
space

In finite-infinite Time—our mortal veil
And shatter'd phantom of that infinite
One,

Who made thee unconceivably Thyself
Out of His whole World-self and all in
all—

Live thou ! and of the grain and husk,
 the grape
 And ivyberry, choose ; and still depart
 From death to death thro' life and life,
 and find
 Nearer and ever nearer Him, who
 wrought
 Not Matter, nor the finite-infinite,
 But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,
 With power on thine own act and on the
 world.

THE HUMAN CRY

I

HALLOWED be Thy name—Halleluiah !—
 Infinite Ideality !
 Immeasurable Reality !
 Infinite Personality !
 Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah !

II

We feel we are nothing—for all is Thou
 and in Thee ;
 We feel we are something—*that* also has
 come from Thee ;
 We know we are nothing—but Thou wilt
 help us to be.
 Hallowed be Thy name—Halleluiah !

PREFATORY SONNET

TO THE 'NINETEENTH CENTURY'

THOSE that of late had fled to far and fast
 To touch all shores, now leaving to the
 skill
 Of others their old craft seaworthy still,
 Have charter'd this ; where, mindful of
 the past,
 Our true co-mates regather round the
 mast ;
 Of diverse tongue, but with a common
 will
 Here, in this roaring moon of daffodil
 And crocus, to put forth and brave the
 blast ;
 For some, descending from the sacred
 peak

Of hoar high-templed Faith, have leagued
 again
 Their lot with ours to rove the world
 about ;
 And some are wilder comrades, sworn to
 seek
 If any golden harbour be for men
 In seas of Death and sunless gulfs of
 Doubt.

TO THE REV. W. H. BROOK-
 FIELD

BROOKS, for they call'd you so that knew
 you best,
 Old Brooks, who loved so well to mouth
 my rhymes,
 How oft we two have heard St. Mary's
 chimes !
 How oft the Cantab supper, host and
 guest,
 Would echo helpless laughter to your
 jest !
 How oft with him we paced that walk of
 limes,
 Him, the lost light of those dawn-golden
 times,
 Who loved you well ! Now both are gone
 to rest.
 You man of humorous-melancholy mark,
 Dead of some inward agony—is it so ?
 Our kindlier, trustier Jaques, past away !
 I cannot laud this life, it looks so dark :
 Σκιᾶς ὄναρ—dream of a shadow, go—
 God bless you. I shall join you in a
 day.

MONTENEGRO

THEY rose to where their sovran eagle
 sails,
 They kept their faith, their freedom, on
 the height,
 Chaste, frugal, savage, arm'd by day and
 night
 Against the Turk ; whose inroad nowhere
 scales
 Their headlong passes, but his footstep
 fails,

And red with blood the Crescent reels
 from fight
 Before their dauntless hundreds, in prone
 flight
 By thousands down the crags and thro'
 the vales.
 O smallest among peoples ! rough rock-
 throne
 Of Freedom ! warriors beating back the
 swarm
 Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years,
 Great Tsernogora ! never since thine own
 Black ridges drew the cloud and brake
 the storm
 Has breathed a race of mightier moun-
 taineers.

TO VICTOR HUGO

VICTOR in Drama, Victor in Romance,
 Cloud-weaver of phantasmal hopes and
 fears,

French of the French, and Lord of human
 tears ;
 Child-lover ; Bard whose fame-lit laurels
 glance
 Darkening the wreaths of all that would
 advance,
 Beyond our strait, their claim to be thy
 peers ;
 Weird Titan by thy winter weight of
 years
 As yet unbroken, Stormy voice of
 France !
 Who dost not love our England—so they
 say ;
 I know not—England, France, all man
 to be
 Will make one people ere man's race be
 run :
 And I, desiring that diviner day,
 Yield thee full thanks for thy full
 courtesy
 To younger England in the boy my son.

TRANSLATIONS, ETC.

BATTLE OF BRUNANBURH

Constantinus, King of the Scots, after having sworn allegiance to Athelstan, allied himself with the Danes of Ireland under Anlaf, and invading England, was defeated by Athelstan and his brother Edmund with great slaughter at Brunanburh in the year 937.

I

¹ ATHELSTAN King,
 Lord among Earls,
 Bracelet-bestower and
 Baron of Barons,
 He with his brother,
 Edmund Atheling,
 Gaining a lifelong
 Glory in battle,
 Slew with the sword-edge
 There by Brunanburh,

¹ I have more or less availed myself of my son's prose translation of this poem in the *Contemporary Review* (November 1876).

Brake the shield-wall,
 Hew'd the lindenwood,²
 Hack'd the battleshield,
 Sons of Edward with hammer'd brands.

II

Theirs was a greatness
 Got from their Grandsires—
 Theirs that so often in
 Strife with their enemies
 Struck for their hoards and their hearths
 and their homes.

III

Bow'd the spoiler,
 Bent the Scotsman,
 Fell the shipcrews
 Doom'd to the death.
 All the field with blood of the fighters
 Flow'd, from when first the great
 Sun-star of morningtide,

² Shields of lindenwood.

Lamp of the Lord God
 Lord everlasting,
 Glode over earth till the glorious creature
 Sank to his setting.

IV

There lay many a man
 Marr'd by the javelin,
 Men of the Northland
 Shot over shield.
 There was the Scotsman
 Weary of war.

V

We the West-Saxons,
 Long as the daylight
 Lasted, in companies
 Troubled the track of the host that we
 hated,
 Grimly with swords that were sharp from
 the grindstone,
 Fiercely we hack'd at the flyers before
 us.

VI

Mighty the Mercian,
 Hard was his hand-play,
 Sparing not any of
 Those that with Anlaf,
 Warriors over the
 Weltering waters
 Borne in the bark's-bosom,
 Drew to this island:
 Doom'd to the death.

VII

Five young kings put asleep by the sword-
 stroke,
 Seven strong Earls of the army of Anlaf
 Fell on the war-field, numberless numbers,
 Shipmen and Scotsmen.

VIII

Then the Norse leader,
 Dire was his need of it,
 Few were his following,
 Fled to his warship:
 Fleeted his vessel to sea with the king
 in it,
 Saving his life on the fallow flood.

IX

Also the crafty one,
 Constantinus,
 Crept to his North again,
 Hoar-headed hero!

X

Slender warrant had
He to be proud of
 The welcome of war-knives—
 He that was reft of his
 Folk and his friends that had
 Fallen in conflict,
 Leaving his son too
 Lost in the carnage,
 Mangled to morsels,
 A youngster in war!

XI

Slender reason had
He to be glad of
 The clash of the war-glaive—
 Traitor and trickster
 And spurner of treaties—
 He nor had Anlaf
 With armies so broken
 A reason for bragging
 That they had the better
 In perils of battle
 On places of slaughter—
 The struggle of standards,
 The rush of the javelins,
 The crash of the charges,¹
 The wielding of weapons—
 The play that they play'd with
 The children of Edward.

XII

Then with their nail'd prows
 Parted the Norsemen, a
 Blood-redden'd relic of
 Javelins over
 The jarring breaker, the deep-
 sea billow,
 Shaping their way toward Dy-
 ffen² again,
 Shamed in their souls.

¹ Lit. 'the gathering of men.' ² Dublin.

XIII

Also the brethren,
King and Atheling,
Each in his glory,
Went to his own in his own West-Saxon-
land,
Glad of the war.

XIV

Many a carcase they left to be carrion,
Many a livid one, many a sallow-skin—
Left for the white-tail'd eagle to tear it,
and
Left for the horny-nibb'd raven to rend
it, and
Gave to the garbaging war-hawk to gorge
it, and
That gray beast, the wolf of the weald.

XV

Never had huger
Slaughter of heroes
Slain by the sword-edge—
Such as old writers
Have writ of in histories—
Hapt in this isle, since
Up from the East-hither
Saxon and Angle from
Over the broad billow
Broke into Britain with
Haughty war-workers who
Harried the Welshman, when
Earls that were lured by the
Hunger of glory gat
Hold of the land.

ACHILLES OVER THE TRENCH

ILIAD, xviii. 202

So saying, light-foot Iris pass'd away.
Then rose Achilles dear to Zeus; and
round
The warrior's puissant shoulders Pallas
flung
Her fringed ægis, and around his head
The glorious goddess wreath'd a golden
cloud,

And from it lighted an all-shining
flame.
As when a smoke from a city goes to
heaven
Far off from out an island girt by foes,
All day the men contend in grievous
war
From their own city, but with set of
sun
Their fires flame thickly, and aloft the
glare
Flies streaming, if perchance the neigh-
bours round
May see, and sail to help them in the
war;
So from his head the splendour went to
heaven.
From wall to dyke he stept, he stood,
nor join'd
The Achæans—honouring his wise
mother's word—
There standing, shouted, and Pallas far
away
Call'd; and a boundless panic shook the
foe.
For like the clear voice when a trumpet
shrills,
Blown by the fierce beleaguers of a
town,
So rang the clear voice of Æakidês;
And when the brazen cry of Æakidês
Was heard among the Trojans, all their
hearts
Were troubled, and the full-maned horses
whirl'd
The chariots backward, knowing griefs
at hand;
And sheer-astounded were the charioteers
To see the dread, unweariable fire
That always o'er the great Peleion's
head
Burn'd, for the bright-eyed goddess made
it burn.
Thrice from the dyke he sent his mighty
shout,
Thrice backward reel'd the Trojans and
allies;
And there and then twelve of their noblest
died
Among their spears and chariots.

TO PRINCESS FREDERICA ON HER MARRIAGE

O YOU that were eyes and light to the
King till he past away
From the darkness of life—
He saw not his daughter—he blest her :
the blind King sees you to-day,
He blesses the wife.

SIR JOHN FRANKLIN

ON THE CENOTAPH IN WESTMINSTER
ABBEY

NOT here ! the white North has thy
bones ; and thou,
Heroic sailor-soul,
Art passing on thine happier voyage now
Toward no earthly pole.

TO DANTE

(WRITTEN AT REQUEST OF THE
FLORENTINES)

KING, that hast reign'd six hundred years,
and grown
In power, and ever growest, since thine
own
Fair Florence honouring thy nativity,
Thy Florence now the crown of Italy,
Hath sought the tribute of a verse from
me,
I, wearing but the garland of a day,
Cast at thy feet one flower that fades
away.

TIRESIAS AND OTHER POEMS

TO MY GOOD FRIEND

ROBERT BROWNING,

WHOSE GENIUS AND GENIALITY WILL BEST APPRECIATE WHAT MAY BE BEST,
AND MAKE MOST ALLOWANCE FOR WHAT MAY BE WORST,
THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

TO E. FITZGERALD

OLD FITZ, who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling Orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile ;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And while your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers ;
Who live on milk and meal and grass ;
And once for ten long weeks I tried
Your table of Pythagoras,

And seem'd at first 'a thing enskied'
(As Shakespeare has it) airy-light
To float above the ways of men,
Then fell from that half-spiritual heigh
Chill'd, till I tasted flesh again
One night when earth was winter-black,
And all the heavens flash'd in frost ;
And on me, half-asleep, came back
That wholesome heat the blood had lost,
And set me climbing icy capes
And glaciers, over which there roll'd
To meet me long-arm'd vines with grapes
Of Eshcol hugeness ; for the cold
Without, and warmth within me, wrought
To mould the dream ; but none can say
That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought,
Who reads your golden Eastern lay,

Than which I know no version done
 In English more divinely well ;
 A planet equal to the sun
 Which cast it, that large infidel
 Your Omar ; and your Omar drew
 Full-handed plaudits from our best
 In modern letters, and from two,
 Old friends outvaluing all the rest,
 Two voices heard on earth no more ;
 But we old friends are still alive,
 And I am nearing seventy-four,
 While you have touch'd at seventy-five,
 And so I send a birthday line
 Of greeting ; and my son, who dipt
 In some forgotten book of mine
 With sallow scraps of manuscript,
 And dating many a year ago,
 Has hit on this, which you will take
 My Fitz, and welcome, as I know
 Less for its own than for the sake
 Of one recalling gracious times,
 When, in our younger London days,
 You found some merit in my rhymes,
 And I more pleasure in your praise.

TIRESIAS

I WISH I were as in the years of old,
 While yet the blessed daylight made itself
 Ruddy thro' both the roofs of sight, and
 woke
 These eyes, now dull, but then so keen
 to seek
 The meanings ambush'd under all they
 saw,
 The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice,
 What omens may foreshadow fate to man
 And woman, and the secret of the Gods.
 My son, the Gods, despite of human
 prayer,
 Are slower to forgive than human kings.
 The great God, Arês, burns in anger still
 Against the guiltless heirs of him from
 Tyre,
 Our Cadmus, out of whom thou art,
 who found
 Beside the springs of Dircê, smote, and
 still'd
 Thro' all its folds the multitudinous beast,
 The dragon, which our trembling fathers
 call'd

The God's own son.

A tale, that told to me,
 When but thine age, by age as winter-
 white
 As mine is now, amazed, but made me
 yearn
 For larger glimpses of that more than man
 Which rolls the heavens, and lifts, and
 lays the deep,
 Yet loves and hates with mortal hates
 and loves,
 And moves unseen among the ways of
 men.
 Then, in my wanderings all the lands
 that lie
 Subjected to the Heliconian ridge
 Have heard this footstep fall, altho' my
 wont
 Was more to scale the highest of the
 heights
 With some strange hope to see the nearer
 God.
 One naked peak—the sister of the sun
 Would climb from out the dark, and
 linger there
 To silver all the valleys with her shafts—
 There once, but long ago, five-fold thy
 term
 Of years, I lay ; the winds were dead
 for heat ;
 The noonday crag made the hand burn ;
 and sick
 For shadow—not one bush was near—
 I rose
 Following a torrent till its myriad falls
 Found silence in the hollows underneath.
 There in a secret olive-glade I saw
 Pallas Athene climbing from the bath
 In anger ; yet one glittering foot disturb'd
 The lucid well ; one snowy knee was prest
 Against the margin flowers ; a dreadful
 light
 Came from her golden hair, her golden
 helm
 And all her golden armour on the grass,
 And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes
 Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew
 dark
 For ever, and I heard a voice that said
 ' Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen
 too much,

And speak the truth that no man may believe.'

Son, in the hidden world of sight, that lives

Behind this darkness, I behold her still,
Beyond all work of those who carve the stone,

Beyond all dreams of Godlike womanhood,

Ineffable beauty, out of whom, at a glance,

And as it were, perforce, upon me flash'd
The power of prophesying—but to me
No power—so chain'd and coupled with the curse

Of blindness and their unbelief, who heard

And heard not, when I spake of famine, plague,

Shrine-shattering earthquake, fire, flood, thunderbolt,

And angers of the Gods for evil done
And expiation lack'd—no power on Fate,
Theirs, or mine own! for when the crowd would roar

For blood, for war, whose issue was their doom,

To cast wise words among the multitude
Was flinging fruit to lions; nor, in hours

Of civil outbreak, when I knew the twain
Would each waste each, and bring on both the yoke

Of stronger states, was mine the voice to curb

The madness of our cities and their kings.

Who ever turn'd upon his heel to hear
My warning that the tyranny of one
Was prelude to the tyranny of all?
My counsel that the tyranny of all
Led backward to the tyranny of one?

This power hath work'd no good to aught that lives,

And these blind hands were useless in their wars.

O therefore that the unfulfill'd desire,
The grief for ever born from griefs to be,
The boundless yearning of the Prophet's heart—

Could *that* stand forth, and like a statue, rear'd

To some great citizen, win all praise from all

Who past it, saying, 'That was he!'

In vain!

Virtue must shape itself in deed, and those

Whom weakness or necessity have cramp'd
Within themselves, immersing, each, his urn

In his own well, draw solace as he may.

Menceceus, thou hast eyes, and I can hear

Too plainly what full tides of onset sap
Our seven high gates, and what a weight of war

Rides on those ringing axles! jingle of bits,

Shouts, arrows, tramp of the hornfooted horse

That grind the glebe to powder! Stony showers

Of that ear-stunning hail of Arês crash
Along the sounding walls. Above, below,

Shock after shock, the song-built towers and gates

Reel, bruised and butted with the shuddering

War-thunder of iron rams; and from within

The city comes a murmur void of joy,
Lest she be taken captive—maidens, wives,

And mothers with their babblers of the dawn,

And oldest age in shadow from the night,

Falling about their shrines before their Gods,

And wailing 'Save us.'

And they wail to thee!

These eyeless eyes, that cannot see thine own,

See this, that only in thy virtue lies

The saving of our Thebes; for, yesternight,

To me, the great God Arês, whose one bliss

Is war, and human sacrifice—himself
Blood-red from battle, spear and helmet
tipt

With stormy light as on a mast at sea,
Stood out before a darkness, crying
'Thebes,

Thy Thebes shall fall and perish, for I
loathe

The seed of Cadmus—yet if one of these
By his own hand—if one of these——'

My son,
No sound is breathed so potent to
coerce,

And to conciliate, as their names who
dare

For that sweet mother land which gave
them birth

Nobly to do, nobly to die. Their names,
Graven on memorial columns, are a
song

Heard in the future ; few, but more than
wall

And rampart, their examples reach a
hand

Far thro' all years, and everywhere they
meet

And kindle generous purpose, and the
strength

To mould it into action pure as theirs.

Fairer thy fate than mine, if life's best
end

Be to end well ! and thou refusing this,
Unvenerable will thy memory be

While men shall move the lips : but if
thou dare—

Thou, one of these, the race of Cadmus
—then

No stone is fitted in yon marble girth
Whose echo shall not tongue thy glorious
doom,

Nor in this pavement but shall ring thy
name

To every hoof that clangs it, and the
springs

Of Dircê laving yonder battle-plain,
Heard from the roofs by night, will mur-
mur thee

To thine own Thebes, while Thebes thro'
thee shall stand

Firm-based with all her Gods.

The Dragon's cave

Half hid, they tell me, now in flowing
vines—

Where once he dwelt and whence he
roll'd himself

At dead of night—thou knowest, and
that smooth rock

Before it, altar-fashion'd, where of late
The woman-breasted Sphinx, with wings
drawn back,

Folded her lion paws, and look'd to
Thebes.

There blanch the bones of whom she
slew, and these

Mixt with her own, because the fierce
beast found

A wiser than herself, and dash'd herself
Dead in her rage : but thou art wise
enough,

Tho' young, to love thy wiser, blunt the
curse

Of Pallas, hear, and tho' I speak the
truth

Believe I speak it, let thine own hand
strike

Thy youthful pulses into rest and quench
The red God's anger, fearing not to plunge
Thy torch of life in darkness, rather—
thou

Rejoicing that the sun, the moon, the
stars

Send no such light upon the ways of men
As one great deed.

Thither, my son, and there
Thou, that hast never known the embrace
of love,

Offer thy maiden life.

This useless hand !

I felt one warm tear fall upon it. Gone !
He will achieve his greatness.

But for me,
I would that I were gather'd to my rest,
And mingled with the famous kings of
old,

On whom about their ocean-islets flash
The faces of the Gods--the wise man's
word,

Here trampled by the populace underfoot,
There crown'd with worship—and these
eyes will find

The men I knew, and watch the chariot
whirl

About the goal again, and hunters race
The shadowy lion, and the warrior-
kings,

In height and prowess more than human,
strive

Again for glory, while the golden lyre
Is ever sounding in heroic ears

Heroic hymns, and every way the vales
Wind, clouded with the grateful incense-
fume

Of those who mix all odour to the Gods
On one far height in one far-shining fire.

‘One height and one far-shining fire’

And while I fancied that my friend

For this brief idyll would require

A less diffuse and opulent end,

And would defend his judgment well,

If I should deem it over nice—

The tolling of his funeral bell

Broke on my Pagan Paradise,

And mixt the dream of classic times

And all the phantoms of the dream,

With present grief, and made the rhymes,

That miss’d his living welcome, seem

Like would-be guests an hour too late,

Who down the highway moving on

With easy laughter find the gate

Is bolted, and the master gone.

Gone into darkness, that full light

Of friendship! past, in sleep, away

By night, into the deeper night!

The deeper night? A clearer day

Than our poor twilight dawn on earth—

If night, what barren toil to be!

What life, so maim’d by night, were
worth

Our living out? Not mine to me

Remembering all the golden hours

Now silent, and so many dead,

And him the last; and laying flowers,

This wreath, above his honour’d head,

And praying that, when I from hence

Shall fade with him into the unknown,

My close of earth’s experience

May prove as peaceful as his own.

THE WRECK

I

HIDE me, Mother! my Fathers belong’d
to the church of old,

I am driven by storm and sin and death
to the ancient fold,

I cling to the Catholic Cross once more,
to the Faith that saves,

My brain is full of the crash of wrecks,
and the roar of waves,

My life itself is a wreck, I have sullied a
noble name,

I am flung from the rushing tide of the
world as a waif of shame,

I am roused by the wail of a child, and
awake to a livid light,

And a ghastlier face than ever has haunted
a grave by night,

I would hide from the storm without, I
would flee from the storm within,

I would make my life one prayer for a
soul that died in his sin,

I was the tempter, Mother, and mine was
the deeper fall;

I will sit at your feet, I will hide my face,
I will tell you all.

II

He that they gave me to, Mother, a
heedless and innocent bride—

I never have wrong’d his heart, I have
only wounded his pride—

Spain in his blood and the Jew—dark-
visaged, stately and tall—

A princelier-looking man never stept thro’
a Prince’s hall.

And who, when his anger was kindled,
would venture to give him the nay?

And a man men fear is a man to be loved
by the women they say.

And I could have loved him too, if the
blossom can doat on the blight,

Or the young green leaf rejoice in the frost
that sears it at night;

He would open the books that I prized,
and toss them away with a yawn,

Repell'd by the magnet of Art to the which
 my nature was drawn,
 The word of the Poet by whom the deeps
 of the world are stirr'd,
 The music that robes it in language beneath
 and beyond the word !
 My Shelley would fall from my hands when
 he cast a contemptuous glance
 From where he was poring over his
 Tables of Trade and Finance ;
 My hands, when I heard him coming,
 would drop from the chords or the
 keys,
 But ever I fail'd to please him, however
 I strove to please—
 All day long far-off in the cloud of the
 city, and there
 Lost, head and heart, in the chances of
 dividend, consol, and share—
 And at home if I sought for a kindly
 caress, being woman and weak,
 His formal kiss fell chill as a flake of snow
 on the cheek :
 And so, when I bore him a girl, when I
 held it aloft in my joy,
 He look'd at it coldly, and said to me
 'Pity it isn't a boy.'
 The one thing given me, to love and to
 live for, glanced at in scorn !
 The child that I felt I could die for—as
 if she were basely born !
 I had lived a wild-flower life, I was planted
 now in a tomb ;
 The daisy will shut to the shadow, I closed
 my heart to the gloom ;
 I threw myself all abroad—I would play
 my part with the young
 By the low foot-lights of the world—and
 I caught the wreath that was flung.

III

Mother, I have not—however their
 tongues may have babbled of me—
 Sinn'd thro' an animal vileness, for all
 but a dwarf was he,
 And all but a hunchback too ; and I
 look'd at him, first, askance,
 With pity—not he the knight for an
 amorous girl's romance !

Tho' wealthy enough to have bask'd in
 the light of a dowerless smile,
 Having lands at home and abroad in a
 rich West-Indian isle ;
 But I came on him once at a ball, the
 heart of a listening crowd—
 Why, what a brow was there ! he was
 seated—speaking aloud
 To women, the flower of the time, and
 men at the helm of state—
 Flowing with easy greatness and touch-
 ing on all things great,
 Science, philosophy, song—till I felt my-
 self ready to weep
 For I knew not what, when I heard that
 voice,—as mellow and deep
 As a psalm by a mighty master and peal'd
 from an organ,—roll
 Rising and falling—for, Mother, the voice
 was the voice of the soul ;
 And the sun of the soul made day in the
 dark of his wonderful eyes.
 Here was the hand that would help me,
 would heal me—the heart that
 was wise !
 And he, poor man, when he learnt that
 I hated the ring I wore,
 He helpt me with death, and he heal'd
 me with sorrow for evermore.

IV

For I broke the bond. That day my
 nurse had brought me the child.
 The small sweet face was flush'd, but it
 coo'd to the Mother and smiled.
 'Anything ailing,' I ask'd her, 'with
 baby?' She shook her head,
 And the Motherless Mother kiss'd it, and
 turn'd in her haste and fled.

V

Low warm winds had gently breathed us
 away from the land—
 Ten long sweet summer days upon deck,
 sitting hand in hand—
 When he clothed a naked mind with the
 wisdom and wealth of his own,
 And I bow'd myself down as a slave to
 his intellectual throne,

When he coin'd into English gold some
treasure of classical song,
When he flouted a statesman's error, or
flamed at a public wrong,
When he rose as it were on the wings of
an eagle beyond me, and past
Over the range and the change of the
world from the first to the last,
When he spoke of his tropical home in
the canes by the purple tide,
And the high star-crowns of his palms on
the deep-wooded mountain-side,
And cliffs all robed in lianas that dropt
to the brink of his bay,
And trees like the towers of a minster,
the sons of a winterless day.
'Paradise there !' so he said, but I seem'd
in Paradise then
With the first great love I had felt for the
first and greatest of men ;
Ten long days of summer and sin—if it
must be so—
But days of a larger light than I ever
again shall know—
Days that will glimmer, I fear, thro' life
to my latest breath ;
'No frost there,' so he said, 'as in truest
Love no Death.'

VI

Mother, one morning a bird with a warble
plaintively sweet
Perch'd on the shrouds, and then fell
fluttering down at my feet ;
I took it, he made it a cage, we fondled
it, Stephen and I,
But it died, and I thought of the child
for a moment, I scarce know why.

VII

But if sin be sin, not inherited fate, as
many will say,
My sin to my desolate little one found
me at sea on a day,
When her orphan wail came borne in the
shriek of a growing wind,
And a voice rang out in the thunders of
Ocean and Heaven 'Thou hast
sinn'd.'

And down in the cabin were we, for the
towering crest of the tides
Plunged on the vessel and swept in a
cataract off from her sides,
And ever the great storm grew with a
howl and a hoot of the blast
In the rigging, voices of hell—then came
the crash of the mast.
'The wages of sin is death,' and there I
began to weep,
'I am the Jonah, the crew should cast
me into the deep,
For ah God, what a heart was mine to
forsake her even for you.'
'Never the heart among women,' he said,
'more tender and true.'
'The heart ! not a mother's heart, when
I left my darling alone.'
'Comfort yourself, for the heart of the
father will care for his own.'
'The heart of the father will spurn her,'
I cried, 'for the sin of the wife,
The cloud of the mother's shame will
enfold her and darken her life.'
Then his pale face twitch'd ; 'O Stephen,
I love you, I love you, and yet'—
As I lean'd away from his arms—'would
God, we had never met !'
And he spoke not—only the storm ; till
after a little, I yearn'd
For his voice again, and he call'd to me
'Kiss me !' and there—as I
turn'd—
'The heart, the heart !' I kiss'd him, I
clung to the sinking form,
And the storm went roaring above us,
and he—was out of the storm.

VIII

And then, then, Mother, the ship stag-
ger'd under a thunderous shock,
That shook us asunder, as if she had
struck and crash'd on a rock ;
For a huge sea smote every soul from the
decks of The Falcon but one ;
All of them, all but the man that was
lash'd to the helm had gone ;
And I fell—and the storm and the days
went by, but I knew no more—

Lost myself—lay like the dead by the
 dead on the cabin floor,
 Dead to the death beside me, and lost to
 the loss that was mine,
 With a dim dream, now and then, of a
 hand giving bread and wine,
 Till I woke from the trance, and the ship
 stood still, and the skies were
 blue,
 But the face I had known, O Mother,
 was not the face that I knew.

IX

The strange misfeaturing mask that I saw
 so amazed me, that I
 Stumbled on deck, half mad. I would
 fling myself over and die !
 But one—he was waving a flag—the one
 man left on the wreck—
 ‘Woman’—he graspt at my arm—‘stay
 there’—I crouch’d upon deck—
 ‘We are sinking, and yet there’s hope :
 look yonder,’ he cried, ‘a sail’
 In a tone so rough that I broke into
 passionate tears, and the wail
 Of a beaten babe, till I saw that a boat
 was nearing us—then
 All on a sudden I thought, I shall look
 on the child again.

X

They lower’d me down the side, and
 there in the boat I lay
 With sad eyes fixt on the lost sea-home,
 as we glided away,
 And I sigh’d, as the low dark hull dipt
 under the smiling main,
 ‘Had I stay’d with *him*, I had now—
 with *him*—been out of my pain.’

XI

They took us aboard: the crew were
 gentle, the captain kind ;
 But *I* was the lonely slave of an often-
 wandering mind ;
 For whenever a rougher gust might
 tumble a stormier wave,
 ‘O Stephen,’ I moan’d, ‘I am coming
 to thee in thine Ocean-grave.’

And again, when a balmier breeze curl’d
 over a peacefuller sea,
 I found myself moaning again ‘O child,
 I am coming to thee.’

XII

The broad white brow of the Isle—that
 bay with the colour’d sand—
 Rich was the rose of sunset there, as we
 drew to the land ;
 All so quiet the ripple would hardly
 blanch into spray
 At the feet of the cliff; and I pray’d—
 ‘my child’—for I still could
 pray—
 ‘May her life be as blissfully calm, be
 never gloom’d by the curse
 Of a sin, not hers !’

Was it well with the child ?

I wrote to the nurse
 Who had borne my flower on her hireling
 heart ; and an answer came
 Not from the nurse—nor yet to the wife
 —to her maiden name !
 I shook as I open’d the letter—I knew
 that hand too well—
 And from it a scrap, clipt out of the
 ‘deaths’ in a paper, fell.
 ‘Ten long sweet summer days’ of fever,
 and want of care !
 And gone—that day of the storm—O
 Mother, she came to me there.

DESPAIR

A man and his wife having lost faith in a God,
 and hope of a life to come, and being utterly
 miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by
 drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man
 rescued by a minister of the sect he had aban-
 doned.

I

Is it you, that preach’d in the chapel
 there looking over the sand ?
 Follow’d us too that night, and dogg’d
 us, and drew me to land ?

II

What did I feel that night ? You are
 curious. How should I tell ?

Does it matter so much what I felt?
 You rescued me—yet—was it
 well
 That you came unwish'd for, uncall'd,
 between me and the deep and my
 doom,
 Three days since, three more dark days
 of the Godless gloom
 Of a life without sun, without health, with-
 out hope, without any delight
 In anything here upon earth? but ah
 God, that night, that night
 When the rolling eyes of the lighthouse
 there on the fatal neck
 Of land running out into rock—they had
 saved many hundreds from wreck—
 Glared on our way toward death, I re-
 member I thought, as we past,
 Does it matter how many they saved?
 we are all of us wreck'd at last—
 'Do you fear?' and there came thro' the
 roar of the breaker a whisper, a
 breath,
 'Fear? am I not with you? I am
 frighted at life not death.'

III

And the suns of the limitless Universe
 sparkled and shone in the sky,
 Flashing with fires as of God, but we
 knew that their light was a lie—
 Bright as with deathless hope—but,
 however they sparkled and shone,
 The dark little worlds running round
 them were worlds of woe like our
 own—
 No soul in the heaven above, no soul on
 the earth below,
 A fiery scroll written over with lamenta-
 tion and woe.

IV

See, we were nursed in the drear night-
 fold of your fatalist creed,
 And we turn'd to the growing dawn, we
 had hoped for a dawn indeed,
 When the light of a Sun that was coming
 would scatter the ghosts of the
 Past,

T

And the cramping creeds that had
 madden'd the peoples would
 vanish at last,
 And we broke away from the Christ, our
 human brother and friend,
 For He spoke, or it seem'd that He
 spoke, of a Hell without help,
 without end.

v

Hoped for a dawn and it came, but the
 promise had faded away;
 We had past from a cheerless night to
 the glare of a drearier day;
 He is only a cloud and a smoke who was
 once a pillar of fire,
 The guess of a worm in the dust and the
 shadow of its desire—
 Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the
 weak trodden down by the strong,
 Of a dying worm in a world, all massacre,
 murder, and wrong.

VI

O we poor orphans of nothing—alone on
 that lonely shore—
 Born of the brainless Nature who knew
 not that which she bore!
 Trusting no longer that earthly flower
 would be heavenly fruit—
 Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls
 —and to die with the brute—

VII

Nay, but I am not claiming your pity: I
 know you of old—
 Small pity for those that have ranged from
 the narrow warmth of your fold,
 Where you bawl'd the dark side of your
 faith and a God of eternal rage,
 Till you flung us back on ourselves, and
 the human heart, and the Age.

VIII

But pity—the Pagan held it a vice—was
 in her and in me,
 Helpless, taking the place of the pitying
 God that should be!

2 N

Pity for all that aches in the grasp of an
 idiot power,
 And pity for our own selves on an earth
 that bore not a flower ;
 Pity for all that suffers on land or in air
 or the deep,
 And pity for our own selves till we long'd
 for eternal sleep.

IX

'Lightly step over the sands ! the waters
 —you hear them call !
 Life with its anguish, and horrors, and
 errors—away with it all !'
 And she laid her hand in my own—she
 was always loyal and sweet—
 Till the points of the foam in the dusk
 came playing about our feet.
There was a strong sea-current would
 sweep us out to the main.
 'Ah God' tho' I felt as I spoke I was
 taking the name in vain—
 'Ah God' and we turn'd to each other,
 we kiss'd, we embraced, she and I,
 Knowing the Love we were used to be-
 lieve everlasting would die :
 We had read their know-nothing books
 and we lean'd to the darker side—
 Ah God, should we find Him, perhaps,
 perhaps, if we died, if we died ;
 We never had found Him on earth, this
 earth is a fatherless Hell—
 'Dear Love, for ever and ever, for ever
 and ever farewell,'
 Never a cry so desolate, not since the
 world began,
 Never a kiss so sad, no, not since the
 coming of man !

X

But the blind wave cast me ashore, and
 you saved me, a valueless life.
 Not a grain of gratitude mine ! You
 have parted the man from the wife.
 I am left alone on the land, she is all
 alone in the sea ;
 If a curse meant ought, I would curse
 you for not having let me be.

XI

Visions of youth—for my brain was drunk
 with the water, it seems ;
 I had past into perfect quiet at length
 out of pleasant dreams,
 And the transient trouble of drowning—
 what was it when match'd with
 the pains
 Of the hellish heat of a wretched life
 rushing back thro' the veins ?

XII

Why should I live ? one son had forged
 on his father and fled,
 And if I believed in a God, I would
 thank him, the other is dead,
 And there was a baby-girl, that had
 never look'd on the light :
 Happiest she of us all, for she past from
 the night to the night.

XIII

But the crime, if a crime, of her eldest-
 born, her glory, her boast,
 Struck hard at the tender heart of the
 mother, and broke it almost ;
 Tho', glory and shame dying out for ever
 in endless time,
 Does it matter so much whether crown'd
 for a virtue, or hang'd for a crime ?

XIV

And ruin'd by *him*, by *him*, I stood
 there, naked, amazed
 In a world of arrogant opulence, fear'd
 myself turning crazed,
 And I would not be mock'd in a mad-
 house ! and she, the delicate wife,
 With a grief that could only be cured, if
 cured, by the surgeon's knife,—

XV

Why should we bear with an hour of
 torture, a moment of pain,
 If every man die for ever, if all his griefs
 are in vain,
 And the homeless planet at length will be
 wheel'd thro' the silence of space,

Motherless evermore of an ever-vanishing
race,
When the worm shall have writhed its
last, and its last brother - worm
will have fled
From the dead fossil skull that is left in
the rocks of an earth that is dead ?

XVI

Have I crazed myself over their horrible
infidel writings? O yes,
For these are the new dark ages, you see,
of the popular press,
When the bat comes out of his cave, and
the owls are whooping at noon,
And Doubt is the lord of this dunghill
and crows to the sun and the
moon,
Till the Sun and the Moon of our science
are both of them turn'd into blood,
And Hope will have broken her heart,
running after a shadow of good ;
For their knowing and know-nothing
books are scatter'd from hand to
hand—
We have knelt in your know-all chapel
too looking over the sand.

XVII

What ! I should call on that Infinite
Love that has served us so well ?
Infinite cruelty rather that made ever-
lasting Hell,
Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us, and
does what he will with his own ;
Better our dead brute mother who never
has heard us groan !

XVIII

Hell ? if the souls of men were immortal,
as men have been told,
The lecher would cleave to his lusts, and
the miser would yearn for his gold,
And so there were Hell for ever ! but
were there a God as you say,
His Love would have power over Hell
till it utterly vanish'd away.

XIX

Ah yet—I have had some glimmer, at
times, in my gloomiest woe,
Of a God behind all—after all—the great
God for aught that I know ;
But the God of Love and of Hell to-
gether—they cannot be thought,
If there be such a God, may the Great
God curse him and bring him to
nought !

XX

Blasphemy ! whose is the fault ? is it
mine ? for why would you save
A madman to vex you with wretched
words, who is best in his grave ?
Blasphemy ! ay, why not, being damn'd
beyond hope of grace ?
O would I were yonder with her, and
away from your faith and your
face !
Blasphemy ! true ! I have scared you
pale with my scandalous talk,
But the blasphemy to *my* mind lies all in
the way that you walk.

XXI

Hence ! she is gone ! can I stay ? can I
breathe divorced from the Past ?
You needs must have good lynx-eyes if I
do not escape you at last.
Our orthodox coroner doubtless will find
it a *felo-de-se*,
And the stake and the cross-road, fool,
if you will, does it matter to me ?

THE ANCIENT SAGE

A THOUSAND summers ere the time of
Christ
From out his ancient city came a Seer
Whom one that loved, and honour'd
him, and yet
Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn
From wasteful living, follow'd—in his
hand
A scroll of verse—till that old man before

A cavern whence an affluent fountain
 pour'd
 From darkness into daylight, turn'd and
 spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to
 draw

From yon dark cave, but, son, the source
 is higher,

Yon summit half-a-league in air—and
 higher,

The cloud that hides it—higher still, the
 heavens

Whereby the cloud was moulded, and
 whereout

The cloud descended. Force is from the
 heights.

I am wearied of our city, son, and go
 To spend my one last year among the
 hills.

What hast thou there? Some deathsong
 for the Ghouls

To make their banquet relish? let me
 read.

“How far thro’ all the bloom and brake
 That nightingale is heard!

What power but the bird’s could make
 This music in the bird?

How summer-bright are yonder skies,
 And earth as fair in hue!

And yet what sign of aught that lies
 Behind the green and blue?

But man to-day is fancy’s fool
 As man hath ever been.

The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule
 Were never heard or seen.”

If thou would’st hear the Nameless, and
 wilt dive

Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,
 There, brooding by the central altar, thou
 May’st haply learn the Nameless hath a
 voice,

By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,
 As if thou knewest, tho’ thou canst not
 know;

For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake
 That sees and stirs the surface-shadow
 there

But never yet hath dipt into the abysm,
 The Abysm of all Abysms, beneath,
 within

The blue of sky and sea, the green of
 earth,

And in the million-millionth of a grain
 Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,
 And ever vanishing, never vanishes,
 To me, my son, more mystic than myself,
 Or even than the Nameless is to me.

And when thou sendest thy free soul
 thro’ heaven,

Nor understandest bound nor boundless-
 ness,

Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred
 names.

And if the Nameless should withdraw
 from all

Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world
 Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

“And since — from when this earth
 began—

The Nameless never came
 Among us, never spake with man,
 And never named the Name”—

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O
 my son,

Nor canst thou prove the world thou
 movest in,

Thou canst not prove that thou art body
 alone,

Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit
 alone,

Nor canst thou prove that thou art both
 in one:

Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no
 Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay my
 son,

Thou canst not prove that I, who speak
 with thee,

Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
 For nothing worthy proving can be
 proven,

Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be
 wise,

Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
 And cling to Faith beyond the forms of
 Faith!

She reels not in the storm of warring
words,
She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and
'No,'
She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the
Worst,
She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,
She spies the summer thro' the winter
bud,
She tastes the fruit before the blossom
falls,
She hears the lark within the songless egg,
She finds the fountain where they wail'd
'Mirage'!

"What Power? aught akin to Mind,
The mind in me and you?
Or power as of the Gods gone blind
Who see not what they do?"

But some in yonder city hold, my son,
That none but Gods could build this
house of ours,
So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond
All work of man, yet, like all work of
man,
A beauty with defect——till That which
knows,
And is not known, but felt thro' what we
feel
Within ourselves is highest, shall descend
On this half-deed, and shape it at the
last
According to the Highest in the Highest.

"What Power but the Years that make
And break the vase of clay,
And stir the sleeping earth, and wake
The bloom that fades away?
What rulers but the Days and Hours
That cancel weal with woe,
And wind the front of youth with flowers,
And cap our age with snow?"

The days and hours are ever glancing
by,
And seem to flicker past thro' sun and
shade,
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or
Pain;

But with the Nameless is nor Day nor
Hour;
Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from
thought to thought,
Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the
Eternal Now:
This doubleseeming of the single world!—
My words are like the babblings in a
dream
Of nightmare, when the babblings break
the dream.
But thou be wise in this dream-world of
ours,
Nor take thy dial for thy deity,
But make the passing shadow serve thy
will.

"The years that made the stripling wise
Undo their work again,
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,
The last and least of men;
Who clings to earth, and once would dare
Hell-heat or Arctic cold,
And now one breath of cooler air
Would loose him from his hold;
His winter chills him to the root,
He withers marrow and mind;
The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit
Is jutting thro' the rind;
The tiger spasms tear his chest,
The palsy wags his head;
The wife, the sons, who love him best
Would fain that he were dead;
The griefs by which he once was wrung
Were never worth the while"—

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow
life
Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

"The shaft of scorn that once had stung
But wakes a dotard smile."

The placid gleam of sunset after storm!

"The statesman's brain that sway'd the
past
Is feebler than his knees;
The passive sailor wrecks at last
In ever-silent seas;

The warrior hath forgot his arms,
 The Learned all his lore ;
 The changing market frets or charms
 The merchant's hope no more ;
 The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,
 And now is lost in cloud ;
 The plowman passes, bent with pain,
 To mix with what he plow'd ;
 The poet whom his Age would quote
 As heir of endless fame—
 He knows not ev'n the book he wrote,
 Not even his own name.
 For man has overlived his day,
 And, darkening in the light,
 Scarce feels the senses break away
 To mix with ancient Night."

The shell must break before the bird can fly.

"The years that when my Youth began
 Had set the lily and rose
 By all my ways where'er they ran,
 Have ended mortal foes ;
 My rose of love for ever gone,
 My lily of truth and trust—
 They made her lily and rose in one,
 And changed her into dust.
 O rosetree planted in my grief,
 And growing, on her tomb,
 Her dust is greening in your leaf,
 Her blood is in your bloom.
 O slender lily waving there,
 And laughing back the light,
 In vain you tell me 'Earth is fair'
 When all is dark as night."

My son, the world is dark with griefs and
 graves,
 So dark that men cry out against the
 Heavens.
 Who knows but that the darkness is in
 man ?
 The doors of Night may be the gates of
 Light ;
 For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and
 then
 Suddenly heal'd, how would'st thou glory
 in all
 The splendours and the voices of the
 world !

And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet
 No phantoms, watching from a phantom
 shore,

Await the last and largest sense to make
 The phantom walls of this illusion fade,
 And show us that the world is wholly fair.

"But vain the tears for darken'd years
 As laughter over wine,
 And vain the laughter as the tears,
 O brother, mine or thine,

For all that laugh, and all that weep
 And all that breathe are one
 Slight ripple on the boundless deep
 That moves, and all is gone."

But that one ripple on the boundless deep
 Feels that the deep is boundless, and
 itself

For ever changing form, but evermore
 One with the boundless motion of the
 deep.

"Yet wine and laughter friends ! and set
 The lamps alight, and call
 For golden music, and forget
 The darkness of the pall."

If utter darkness closed the day, my
 son—
 But earth's dark forehead flings athwart
 the heavens
 Her shadow crown'd with stars—and
 yonder—out
 To northward—some that never set, but
 pass
 From sight and night to lose themselves
 in day.
 I hate the black negation of the bier,
 And wish the dead, as happier than our-
 selves
 And higher, having climb'd one step
 beyond
 Our village miseries, might be borne in
 white
 To burial or to burning, hymn'd from
 hence
 With songs in praise of death, and
 crown'd with flowers !

"O worms and maggots of to-day
Without their hope of wings!"

But louder than thy rhyme the silent Word
Of that world-prophet in the heart of man.

"Tho' some have gleams or so they say
Of more than mortal things."

To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft
On me, when boy, there came what then
I call'd,
Who knew no books and no philosophies,
In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the
Past.'

The first gray streak of earliest summer-
dawn,

The last long stripe of waning crimson
gloom,

As if the late and early were but one—
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a
flower

Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost
and gone!'

A breath, a whisper—some divine fare-
well—

Desolate sweetness—far and far away—
What had he loved, what had he lost,
the boy?

I know not and I speak of what has been.
And more, my son! for more than
once when I

Sat all alone, revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs,
the limbs

Were strange not mine—and yet no shade
of doubt,

But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self
The gain of such large life as match'd
with ours

Were Sun to spark—unshadowable in
words,

Themselves but shadows of a shadow-
world.

"And idle gleams will come and go,
But still the clouds remain;"

The clouds themselves are children of the
Sun.

"And Night and Shadow rule below
When only Day should reign."

And Day and Night are children of the
Sun,

And idle gleams to thee are light to me.
Some say, the Light was father of the
Night,

And some, the Night was father of the
Light,

No night no day!—I touch thy world
again—

No ill no good! such counter-terms, my
son,

Are border-races, holding, each its own
By endless war: but night enough is there
In yon dark city: get thee back: and
since

The key to that weird casket, which for
thee

But holds a skull, is neither thine nor
mine,

But in the hand of what is more than man,
Or in man's hand when man is more than
man,

Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,
And make thy gold thy vassal not thy
king,

And fling free alms into the beggar's bowl,
And send the day into the darken'd heart;
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,
A dying echo from a falling wall;
Nor care—for Hunger hath the Evil eye—
To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold
Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous
looms;

Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,
Nor drown thyself with flies in honied
wine;

Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,
And lose thy life by usage of thy sting;
Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for harm,
Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wan-
tonness;

And more—think well! Do-well will
follow thought,

And in the fatal sequence of this world

An evil thought may soil thy children's
 blood ;
 But curb the beast would cast thee in the
 mire,
 And leave the hot swamp of voluptuous-
 ness
 A cloud between the Nameless and thyself,
 And lay thine uphill shoulder to the
 wheel,
 And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence,
 if thou
 Look higher, then—perchance—thou
 mayest—beyond
 A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
 And past the range of Night and Shadow
 —see
 The high-heaven dawn of more than
 mortal day
 Strike on the Mount of Vision !
 So, farewell.

THE FLIGHT

I

ARE you sleeping? have you forgotten?
 do not sleep, my sister dear !
 How *can* you sleep? the morning brings
 the day I hate and fear ;
 The cock has crow'd already once, he
 crows before his time ;
 Awake ! the creeping glimmer steals, the
 hills are white with rime.

II

Ah, clasp me in your arms, sister, ah,
 fold me to your breast !
 Ah, let me weep my fill once more, and
 cry myself to rest !
 To rest? to rest and wake no more were
 better rest for me,
 Than to waken every morning to that
 face I loathe to see :

III

I envied your sweet slumber, all night so
 calm you lay,
 The night was calm, the morn is calm,
 and like another day ;

But I could wish yon moaning sea would
 rise and burst the shore,
 And such a whirlwind blow these woods,
 as never blew before.

IV

For, one by one, the stars went down
 across the gleaming pane,
 And project after project rose, and all of
 them were vain ;
 The blackthorn-blossom fades and falls
 and leaves the bitter sloe,
 The hope I catch at vanishes and youth
 is turn'd to woe.

V

Come, speak a little comfort ! all night
 I pray'd with tears,
 And yet no comfort came to me, and
 now the morn appears,
 When he will tear me from your side,
 who bought me for his slave :
 This father pays his debt with me, and
 weds me to my grave.

VI

What father, this or mine, was he, who,
 on that summer day
 When I had fall'n from off the crag we
 clamber'd up in play,
 Found, fear'd me dead, and groan'd, and
 took and kiss'd me, and again
 He kiss'd me ; and I loved him then ;
 he *was* my father then.

VII

No father now, the tyrant vassal of a
 tyrant vice !
 The Godless Jephtha vows his child . . .
 to one cast of the dice.
 These ancient woods, this Hall at last
 will go—perhaps have gone,
 Except his own meek daughter yield her
 life, heart, soul to one—

VIII

To one who knows I scorn him. O the
 formal mocking bow,

The cruel smile, the courtly phrase that
 masks his malice now—
 But often in the sidelong eyes a gleam of
 all things ill—
 It is not Love but Hate that weds a
 bride against her will ;

IX

Hate, that would pluck from this true
 breast the locket that I wear,
 The precious crystal into which I braided
 Edwin's hair !
 The love that keeps this heart alive beats
 on it night and day—
 One golden curl, his golden gift, before
 he past away.

X

He left us weeping in the woods ; his
 boat was on the sand ;
 How slowly down the rocks he went,
 how loth to quit the land !
 And all my life was darken'd, as I saw
 the white sail run,
 And darken, up that lane of light into
 the setting sun.

XI

How often have we watch'd the sun fade
 from us thro' the West,
 And follow Edwin to those isles, those
 islands of the Blest !
 Is *he* not there ? would I were there, the
 friend, the bride, the wife,
 With him, where summer never dies,
 with Love, the Sun of life !

XII

O would I were in Edwin's arms—once
 more—to feel his breath
 Upon my cheek—on Edwin's ship, with
 Edwin, ev'n in death,
 Tho' all about the shuddering wreck the
 death-white sea should rave,
 Or if lip were laid to lip on the pillows
 of the wave.

XIII

Shall I take *him* ? I kneel with *him* ? I
 swear and swear forsworn
 To love him most, whom most I loathe,
 to honour whom I scorn ?
 The Fiend would yell, the grave would
 yawn, my mother's ghost would
 rise—
 To lie, to lie—in God's own house—the
 blackest of all lies !

XIV

Why—rather than that hand in mine,
 tho' every pulse would freeze,
 I'd sooner fold an icy corpse dead of
 some foul disease :
 Wed him ? I will not wed him, let them
 spurn me from the doors,
 And I will wander till I die about the
 barren moors.

XV

The dear, mad bride who stabb'd her
 bridegroom on her bridal night—
 If mad, then I am mad, but sane, if she
 were in the right.
 My father's madness makes me mad—
 but words are only words !
 I am not mad, not yet, not quite—There !
 listen how the birds

XVI

Begin to warble yonder in the budding
 orchard trees !
 The lark has past from earth to Heaven
 upon the morning breeze !
 How gladly, were I one of those, how
 early would I wake !
 And yet the sorrow that I bear is sorrow
 for *his* sake.

XVII

They love their mates, to whom they
 sing ; or else their songs, that meet
 The morning with such music, would
 never be so sweet !
 And tho' these fathers will not hear, the
 blessed Heavens are just,

And Love is fire, and burns the feet
would trample it to dust.

XVIII

A door was open'd in the house—who?
who? my father sleeps!
A stealthy foot upon the stair! he—some
one—this way creeps!
If he? yes, he . . . lurks, listens, fears
his victim may have fled—
He! where is some sharp-pointed thing?
he comes, and finds me dead.

XIX

Not he, not yet! and time to act—but
how my temples burn!
And idle fancies flutter me, I know not
where to turn;
Speak to me, sister; counsel me; this
marriage must not be.
You only know the love that makes the
world a world to me!

XX

Our gentle mother, had *she* lived—but
we were left alone:
That other left us to ourselves; he cared
not for his own;
So all the summer long we roam'd in
these wild woods of ours,
My Edwin loved to call us then 'His
two wild woodland flowers.'

XXI

Wild flowers blowing side by side in
God's free light and air,
Wild flowers of the secret woods, when
Edwin found us there,
Wild woods in which we roved with him,
and heard his passionate vow,
Wild woods in which we rove no more,
if we be parted now!

XXII

You will not leave me thus in grief to
wander forth forlorn;

We never changed a bitter word, not
once since we were born;
Our dying mother join'd our hands; she
knew this father well;
She bad us love, like souls in Heaven,
and now I fly from Hell,

XXIII

And you with me; and we shall light
upon some lonely shore,
Some lodge within the waste sea-dunes,
and hear the waters roar,
And see the ships from out the West go
dipping thro' the foam,
And sunshine on that sail at last which
brings our Edwin home.

XXIV

But look, the morning grows apace, and
lights the old church-tower,
And lights the clock! the hand points
five—O me—it strikes the hour—
I bide no more, I meet my fate, whatever
ills betide!
Arise, my own true sister, come forth!
the world is wide.

XXV

And yet my heart is ill at ease, my eyes
are dim with dew,
I seem to see a new-dug grave up yonder
by the yew!
If we should never more return, but
wander hand in hand
With breaking hearts, without a friend,
and in a distant land.

XXVI

O sweet, they tell me that the world is
hard, and harsh of mind,
But can it be so hard, so harsh, as those
that should be kind?
That matters not: let come what will;
at last the end is sure,
And every heart that loves with truth is
equal to endure.

TOMORROW

I

HER, that yer Honour was spakin' to?
 Whin, yer Honour? last year—
 Standin' here be the bridge, when last
 yer Honour was here?
 An' yer Honour ye gev her the top of the
 mornin', 'Tomorra' says she.
 What did they call her, yer Honour?
 They call'd her Molly Magee.
 An' yer Honour's the thrue ould blood
 that always manes to be kind,
 But there's rason in all things, yer
 Honour, for Molly was out of her
 mind.

II

Shure, an' meself remimbers wan night
 comin' down be the sthrame,
 An' it seems to me now like a bit of
 yisther-day in a dhrame—
 Here where yer Honour seen her—there
 was but a slip of a moon,
 But I hard thim—Molly Magee wid her
 batchelor, Danny O'Roon—
 'You've been takin' a dhrop o' the
 crathur' an' Danny says 'Troth,
 an' I been
 Dhrinkin' yer health wid Shamus O'Shea
 at Katty's shebeen;¹
 But I must be lavin' ye soon.' 'Ochone
 are ye goin' away?'
 'Goin' to cut the Sassenach whate' he
 says 'over the say'—
 'An' whin will ye meet me agin?' an' I
 hard him 'Molly asthore,
 I'll meet you agin tomorra,' says he, 'be
 the chapel-door.'
 'An' whin are ye goin' to lave me?'
 'O' Monday mornin'' says he;
 'An' shure thin ye'll meet me tomorra?'
 'Tomorra, tomorra, Machree!'
 Thin Molly's ould mother, yer Honour,
 that had no likin' for Dan,
 Call'd from her cabin an' tould her to
 come away from the man,

¹ Grog-shop.

An' Molly Magee kem flyin' across me,
 as light as a lark,
 An' Dan stood there for a minute, an'
 thin wint into the dark.
 But wirrah! the storm that night—the
 tundher, an' rain that fell,
 An' the sthrames runnin' down at the
 back o' the glin 'ud 'a dhrownded
 Hell.

III

But airth was at pace nixt mornin', an'
 Hiven in its glory smiled,
 As the Holy Mother o' Glory that smiles
 at her sleepin' child—
 Ethen—she stept an the chapel-green,
 an' she turn'd herself roun'
 Wid a diamond dhrop in her eye, for
 Danny was not to be foun',
 An' many's the time that I watch'd her
 at mass lettin' down the tear,
 For the Divil a Danny was there, yer
 Honour, for forty year.

IV

Och, Molly Magee, wid the red o' the
 rose an' the white o' the May,
 An' yer hair as black as the night, an'
 yer eyes as bright as the day!
 Achora, yer laste little whishper was
 sweet as the lilt of a bird!
 Acushla, ye set me heart batin' to music
 wid ivery word!
 An' sorra the Queen wid her sceptre in
 sich an illigant han',
 An' the fall of yer foot in the dance was
 as light as snow an the lan',
 An' the sun kem out of a cloud whiniver
 ye walkt in the shstreet,
 An' Shamus O'Shea was yer shadda, an'
 laid himself undher yer feet,
 An' I loved ye meself wid a heart and a
 half, me darlin', and he
 'Ud 'a shot his own sowl dead for a kiss
 of ye, Molly Magee.

V

But shure we wor betther frinds whin I
 crack'd his skull for her sake,

An' he ped me back wid the best he
could give at ould Donovan's
wake—

For the boys wor about her agin whin
Dan didn't come to the fore,

An' Shamus along wid the rest, but she
put thim all to the door.

An', afther, I thried her meself av the
bird 'ud come to me call,

But Molly, begorra, 'ud listhen to
naither at all, at all.

VI

An' her nabours an' frinds 'ud consowl an'
condowl wid her, airly and late,

'Your Danny,' they says, 'niver crasst
over say to the Sassenach whate ;

He's gone to the States, aroon, an' he's
married another wife,

An' ye'll niver set eyes an the face of
the thraithur agin in life !

An' to dhrame of a married man, death
alive, is a mortal sin.'

But Molly says 'I'd his hand-promise, an'
shure he'll meet me agin.'

VII

An' afther her paärints had inter'd glory,
an' both in wan day,

She began to spake to herself, the
crathur, an' whisper, and say

'Tomorra, Tomorra !' an' Father Mo-
lowny he tuk her in han',

'Molly, you're manin',' he says, 'me
dear, av I undherstan',

That ye'll meet your paärints agin an'
yer Danny O'Roon afore God

Wid his blessed Marthyrs an' Saints';
an' she gev him a frindly nod,

'Tomorra, Tomorra,' she says, an' she
didn't intind to desave,

But her wits wor dead, an' her hair was
as white as the snow an a grave.

VIII

Arrah now, here last month they wor
diggin' the bog, an' they foun'

Dhrownded in black bog-wather a corp
lyin' undher groun'.

IX

Yer Honour's own agint, he says to me
wanst, at Katty's shebeen,

'The Divil take all the black lan', for a
blessin' 'ud come wid the green !'

An' where 'ud the poor man, thin, cut
his bit o' turf for the fire ?

But och ! bad scan to the bogs whin
they swallies the man intire !

An' sorra the bog that's in Hiven wid all
the light an' the glow,

An' there's hate enough, shure, widout
thim in the Divil's kitchen below.

X

Thim ould blind nagers in Agypt, I hard
his Riverence say,

Could keep their haithen kings in the
flesh for the Jidgemint day,

An', faix, be the piper o' Moses, they kep
the cat an' the dog,

But it 'ud 'a been aisier work av they
lived be an Irish bog.

XI

How-an-iver they laid this body they
foun' an the grass

Be the chapel-door, an' the people 'ud
see it that wint in to mass—

But a frish generation had riz, an' most
of the ould was few,

An' I didn't know him meself, an' nōne
of the parish knew.

XII

But Molly kem limpin' up wid her stick,
she was lamed iv a knee,

Thin a slip of a gossoon call'd, 'Div ye
know him, Molly Magee ?'

An' she stood up strait as the Queen of
the world—she lifted her head—

'He said he would meet me tomorra !'
an' dhropt down dead an the dead.

XIII

Och, Molly, we thought, machree, ye
would start back agin into life,

Whin we laid yez, aich by aich, at yer
wake like husban' an' wife.

Sorra the dhry eye thin but was wet for
the frinds that was gone !
Sorra the silent throat but we hard it
cryin' 'Ochone !'
An' Shamus O'Shea that has now ten
childer, handsome an' tall,
Him an' his childer wor keenin' as if he
had lost thim all.

XIV

Thin his Riverence buried thim both in
wan grave be the dead boor-tree,¹
The young man Danny O'Roon wid his
ould woman, Molly Magee.

XV

May all the flowers o' Jeroosilim blossom
an' spring from the grass,
Imbrashin' an' kissin' aich other—as ye
did—over yer Crass !
An' the lark fly out o' the flowers wid his
song to the Sun an' the Moon,
An' tell thim in Hiven about Molly Magee
an' her Danny O'Roon,
Till Holy St. Pether gets up wid his kays
an' opens the gate !
An' shure, be the Crass, that's betther
nor cuttin' the Sassenach whate
To be there wid the Blessed Mother, an'
Saints an' Marthys galore,
An' singin' yer 'Aves' an' 'Pathers' for
iver an' ivermore.

XVI

An' now that I tould yer Honour what-
iver I hard an' seen,
Yer Honour 'ill give me a thrifle to dhrink
yer health in potheen.

THE SPINSTER'S SWEET-ARTS

I

MILK for my sweet-arts, Bess ! fur it mun
be the time about now
When Molly cooms in fro' the far-end
close wi' her paäils fro' the cow.

¹ Elder-tree.

Eh ! tha be new to the plaäce—thou'rt
gaäpin'—doesn't tha see
I calls 'em arter the fellers es once was
sweet upo' me ?

II

Naäy to be sewer it be past 'er time.
What maäkes 'er sa laäte ?
Goä to the laäne at the back, an' looök
thruf Maddison's gaäte !

III

Sweet-arts ! Molly belike may 'a lighted
to-night upo' one.
Sweet-arts ! thanks to the Lord that I
niver not listen'd to noän !
So I sits i' my oän armchair wi' my oän
kettle theere o' the hob,
An' Tommy the fust, an' Tommy the
second, an' Steevie an' Rob.

IV

Rob, coom oop 'ere o' my knee. Thou
sees that i' spite o' the men
I 'a kep' thruf thick an' thin my two
'oonderd a-year to mysen ;
Yis ! thaw tha call'd me es pretty es ony
lass i' the Shere ;
An' thou be es pretty a Tabby, but Robby
I seed thruf ya theere.

V

Feyther 'ud saäy I wur ugly es sin, an' I
beänt not vaäin,
But I niver wur downright hugly, thaw
soom 'ud 'a thowt ma plaäin,
An' I wasn't sa plaäin i' pink ribbons, ye
said I wur pretty i' pinks,
An' I liked to 'ear it I did, but I beänt
sich a fool as ye thinks ;
Ye was stroäkin ma down wi' the 'air, as
I be a-stroäkin o' you,
But whiniver I looöked i' the glass I wur
sewer that it couldn't be true ;
Niver wur pretty, not I, but ye knaw'd it
wur pleasant to 'ear,
Thaw it warn't not me es wur pretty, but
my two 'oonderd a-year.

VI

D'ya mind the murnin' when we was a-
walkin' together, an' stood
By the claäy'd-oop pond, that the foälk
be sa scared at, i' Gigglesby wood,
Wheer the poor wench drownid hersen,
black Sal, es 'ed been disgraaced ?
An' I feel'd thy arm es I stood wur a-
creeäpin about my waäist ;
An' me es wur allus afear'd of a man's
gittin' ower fond,
I sidled awaäy an' awaäy till I plumpt foot
fust i' the pond ;
And, Robby, I niver 'a liked tha sa well,
as I did that daäy,
Fur tha joompt in thysen, an' tha hoickt
my feet wi' a flop fro' the claäy.
Ay, stick oop thy back, an' set oop thy
taäil, tha may gie ma a kiss,
Fur I walk'd wi' tha all the way hoam
an wur niver sa nigh saäyin' Yis.
But wa boäth was i' sich a clat we was
shaämed to cross Gigglesby Greeän,
Fur a cat may looök at a king thou knows
but the cat mun be cleän.
Sa we boäth on us kep out o' sight o' the
winders o' Gigglesby Hinn—
Naäy, but the claws o' tha ! quiet ! they
pricks cleän thruf to the skin—
An' wa boäth slinkt 'oäm by the brokken
shed i' the laäne at the back,
Wheer the poodle runn'd at tha once, an'
thou runn'd oop o' the thack ;
An' tha squeeze'd my 'and i' the shed,
fur theere we was forced to 'ide,
Fur I seed that Steevie wur coomin', and
one o' the Tommies beside.

VII

Theere now, what art'a mewin at, Steevie ?
for owt I can tell—
Robby wur fust to be sewer, or I mowt
'a liked tha as well.

VIII

But, Robby, I thowt o' tha all the while
I wur chaängin' my gown,
An' I thowt shall I chaänge my staäte ?
but, O Lord, upo' coomin' down—

My bran-new carpèt es fresh es a midder
o' flowers i' Maäy—
Why 'edn't tha wiped thy shoes ? it wur
clatted all ower wi' claäy.
An' I could 'a cried ammost, fur I seed
that it couldn't be,
An' Robby I gied tha a raätin that sattled
thy coortin o' me.
An' Molly an' me was agreed, as we was
a-cleänin' the floor,
That a man be a durty thing an' a trouble
an' plague wi' indoor.
But I rued it arter a bit, fur I stuck to
tha moor na the rest,
But I couldn't 'a lived wi' a man an' I
knows it be all fur the best.

IX

Naäy—let ma stroäk tha down till I
maäkes tha es smooth es silk,
But if I 'ed married tha, Robby, thou'd
not 'a been worth thy milk,
Thou'd niver 'a cotch'd ony mice but 'a
left me the work to do,
And 'a taäen to the bottle beside, so es
all that I 'ears be true ;
But I loovs tha to maäke thysen 'appy,
an' soa purr awaäy, my dear,
Thou 'ed wellnigh purr'd ma awaäy fro'
my oän two 'oonderd a-year.

X

Sweärin agean, you Toms, as ye used to
do twelve year sin' !
Ye niver 'eärd Steevie sweär 'cep' it wur
at a dog coomin' in,
An' boath o' ye mun be fools to be hallus
a-shawin' your claws,
Fur I niver cared nothink for neither—
an' one o' ye deäð ye knows !
Coom gie hoäver then, weant ye ? I
warrant ye soom fine daäy—
Theere, lig down—I shall hev to gie one
or tother awaäy.
Can't ye taäke pattern by Steevie ? ye
shant hev a drop fro' the paäil.
Steevie be right good manners bang thruf
to the tip o' the taäil.

XI

Robby, git down wi'tha, wilt tha? let
 Steevie coom oop o' my knee.
 Steevie, my lad, thou 'ed very nigh been
 the Steevie fur me!
 Robby wur fust to be sewer, 'e wur burn
 an' bred i' the 'ouse,
 But thou be es 'ansom a tabby es iver
 patted a mouse.

XII

An' I beänt not vaäin, but I knaws I 'ed
 led tha a quieter life
 Nor her wi' the hepitaph yonder! "A
 faäithful an' loovin' wife!"
 An' 'cos o' thy farm by the beck, an' thy
 windmill oop o' the croft,
 Tha thowt tha would marry ma, did tha?
 but that wur a bit ower soft,
 Thaw thou was es soäber es daäy, wi' a
 niced red faäce, an' es cleän
 Es a shillin' fresh fro' the mint wi' a bran-
 new 'eäd o' the Queeän,
 An' thy farmin' es cleän es thysen', fur,
 Steevie, tha kep' it sa neät
 That I niver not spied sa much es a
 poppy along wi' the wheät,
 An' the wool of a thistle a-flyin' an'
 seeädin' tha haäted to see;
 'Twur es bad es a battle-twig¹ 'ere i' my
 oän blue chaumber to me.
 Ay, roob thy whiskers ageän ma, fur I
 could 'a taäen to tha well,
 But fur thy bairns, poor Steevie, a
 bouncin' boy an' a gell.

XIII

An' thou was es fond o' thy bairns es I
 be mysen o' my cats,
 But I niver not wish'd fur childer, I
 hevn't naw likin' fur brats;
 Pretty anew when ya dresses 'em oop,
 an' they goäs fur a walk,
 Or sits wi' their 'ands afoor 'em, an'
 doesn't not 'inder the talk!
 But their bottles o' pap, an' their mucky
 bibs, an' the clats an' the clouts,

¹ Earwig.

An' their mashin' their toys to pieäces
 an' maäkin' ma deäf wi' their
 shouts,
 An' hallus a-joompin' about ma as if they
 was set upo' springs,
 An' a haxin' ma hawkard questions, an'
 saäyin' ondecnt things,
 An' a-callin' ma 'hugly' mayhap to my
 faäce, or a teärin' my gown—
 Dear! dear! dear! I mun part them
 Tommies—Steevie git down.

XIV

Ye be wuss nor the men-tommies, you.
 I tell'd ya, na moor o' that!
 Tom, lig there o' the cushion, an' tother
 Tom 'ere o' the mat.

XV

Theere! I ha' master'd *them*! Hed I
 married the Tommies—O Lord,
 To loove an' obaäy the Tommies! I
 couldn't 'a stuck by my word.
 To be horder'd about, an' waäked, when
 Molly 'd put out the light,
 By a man coomin' in wi' a hiccup at ony
 hour o' the night!
 An' the taäble staäin'd wi' 'is aäle, an' the
 mud o' 'is boots o' the stairs,
 An' the stink o' 'is pipe i' the 'ouse,
 an' the mark o' 'is 'eäd o' the
 chairs!
 An' noän o' my four sweet-arts 'ud 'a let
 me 'a hed my oän waäy,
 Sa I likes 'em best wi' taäils when they
 'evn't a word to saäy.

XVI

An' I sits i' my oän little parlour, an'
 sarved by my oän little lass,
 Wi' my oän little garden outside, an' my
 oän bed o' sparrow-grass,
 An' my oän door-poorch wi' the wood-
 bine an' jessmine a-dressin' it
 greäc,
 An' my oän fine Jackman i' purple a
 roäbin' the 'ouse like a Queeän.

XVII

An' the little gells bobs to ma hoffens es
 I be abroad i' the laänes,
 When I goäs fur to coomfut the poor es
 be down wi' their haäches an'
 their paäins :
 An' a haäf-pot o' jam, or a mossel o' meät
 when it beänt too dear,
 They maäkes ma a graäter Laädy nor 'er
 i' the mansion theer,
 Hes 'es hallus to hax of a man how much
 to spare or to spend ;
 An' a spinster I be an' I will be, if soä
 pleäse God, to the hend.

XVIII

Mew ! mew !—Bess wi' the milk ! what
 ha maäde our Molly sa laäte ?
 It should 'a been 'ere by seven, an' theere
 —it be strikin' height—
 'Cushie wur craäzed fur 'er cauf' well—I
 'eärd 'er a maäkin' 'er moän,
 An' I thowt to mysen 'thank God that I
 hevn't naw cauf o' my oän.'
 There !
 Set it down !
 Now Robby !
 You Tommies shall waäit to-night
 Till Robby an' Steevie 'es 'ed their lap
 —an' it sarves ye right.

LOCKSLEY HALL

SIXTY YEARS AFTER

LATE, my grandson ! half the morning have I paced these sandy tracts,
 Watch'd again the hollow ridges roaring into cataracts,

Wander'd back to living boyhood while I heard the curlews call,
 I myself so close on death, and death itself in Locksley Hall.

So—your happy suit was blasted—she the faultless, the divine ;
 And you liken—boyish babble—this boy-love of yours with mine.

I myself have often babbled doubtless of a foolish past ;
 Babble, babble ; our old England may go down in babble at last.

'Curse him !' curse your fellow-victim ? call him dotard in your rage ?
 Eyes that lured a doting boyhood well might fool a dotard's age.

Jilted for a wealthier ! wealthier ? yet perhaps she was not wise ;
 I remember how you kiss'd the miniature with those sweet eyes.

In the hall there hangs a painting—Amy's arms about my neck—
 Happy children in a sunbeam sitting on the ribs of wreck.

In my life there was a picture, she that clasp'd my neck had flown ;
 I was left within the shadow sitting on the wreck alone.

Yours has been a slighter ailment, will you sicken for her sake ?
 You, not you ! your modern amourist is of easier, earthlier make.

Amy loved me, Amy fail'd me, Amy was a timid child ;
 But your Judith—but your worldling—*she* had never driven me wild.

She that holds the diamond necklace dearer than the golden ring,
She that finds a winter sunset fairer than a morn of Spring.

She that in her heart is brooding on his briefer lease of life,
While she vows 'till death shall part us,' she the would-be-widow wife.

She the worldling born of worldlings—father, mother—be content,
Ev'n the homely farm can teach us there is something in descent.

Yonder in that chapel, slowly sinking now into the ground,
Lies the warrior, my forefather, with his feet upon the hound.

Cross'd ! for once he sail'd the sea to crush the Moslem in his pride ;
Dead the warrior, dead his glory, dead the cause in which he died.

Yet how often I and Amy in the mouldering aisle have stood,
Gazing for one pensive moment on that founder of our blood.

There again I stood to-day, and where of old we knelt in prayer,
Close beneath the casement crimson with the shield of Locksley—there,

All in white Italian marble, looking still as if she smiled,
Lies my Amy dead in child-birth, dead the mother, dead the child.

Dead—and sixty years ago, and dead her aged husband now—
I this old white-headed dreamer stoop and kiss'd her marble brow.

Gone the fires of youth, the follies, furies, curses, passionate tears,
Gone like fires and floods and earthquakes of the planet's dawning years.

Fires that shook me once, but now to silent ashes fall'n away.
Cold upon the dead volcano sleeps the gleam of dying day.

Gone the tyrant of my youth, and mute below the chancel stones,
All his virtues—I forgive them—black in white above his bones.

Gone the comrades of my bivouac, some in fight against the foe,
Some thro' age and slow diseases, gone as all on earth will go.

Gone with whom for forty years my life in golden sequence ran,
She with all the charm of woman, she with all the breadth of man,

Strong in will and rich in wisdom, Edith, yet so lowly-sweet,
Woman to her inmost heart, and woman to her tender feet,

Very woman of very woman, nurse of ailing body and mind,
She that link'd again the broken chain that bound me to my kind.

Here to-day was Amy with me, while I wander'd down the coast,
Near us Edith's holy shadow, smiling at the slighter ghost.

Gone our sailor son thy father, Leonard early lost at sea ;
Thou alone, my boy, of Amy's kin and mine art left to me.

Gone thy tender-natured mother, wearying to be left alone,
Pining for the stronger heart that once had beat beside her own.

Truth, for Truth is Truth, he worshipt, being true as he was brave ;
Good, for Good is Good, he follow'd, yet he look'd beyond the grave,

Wiser there than you, that crowning barren Death as lord of all,
Deem this over-tragic drama's closing curtain is the pall !

Beautiful was death in him, who saw the death, but kept the deck,
Saving women and their babes, and sinking with the sinking wreck,

Gone for ever ! Ever ? no—for since our dying race began,
Ever, ever, and for ever was the leading light of man.

Those that in barbarian burials kill'd the slave, and slew the wife
Felt within themselves the sacred passion of the second life.

Indian warriors dream of ampler hunting grounds beyond the night ;
Ev'n the black Australian dying hopes he shall return, a white.

Truth for truth, and good for good ! The Good, the True, the Pure, the Just—
Take the charm 'For ever' from them, and they crumble into dust.

Gone the cry of 'Forward, Forward,' lost within a growing gloom ;
Lost, or only heard in silence from the silence of a tomb.

Half the marvels of my morning, triumphs over time and space,
Staled by frequency, shrunk by usage into commonest commonplace !

'Forward' rang the voices then, and of the many mine was one.
Let us hush this cry of 'Forward' till ten thousand years have gone.

Far among the vanish'd races, old Assyrian kings would flay
Captives whom they caught in battle—iron-hearted victors they.

Ages after, while in Asia, he that led the wild Moguls,
Timur built his ghastly tower of eighty thousand human skulls,

Then, and here in Edward's time, an age of noblest English names,
Christian conquerors took and flung the conquer'd Christian into flames.

Love your enemy, bless your haters, said the Greatest of the great ;
Christian love among the Churches look'd the twin of heathen hate.

From the golden alms of Blessing man had coin'd himself a curse :
Rome of Cæsar, Rome of Peter, which was crueller ? which was worse ?

France had shown a light to all men, preach'd a Gospel, all men's good ;
Celtic Demos rose a Demon, shriek'd and slaked the light with blood.

Hope was ever on her mountain, watching till the day begun—
Crown'd with sunlight—over darkness—from the still unrisen sun,

Have we grown at last beyond the passions of the primal clan?
'Kill your enemy, for you hate him,' still, 'your enemy' was a man.

Have we sunk below them? peasants maim the helpless horse, and drive
Innocent cattle under thatch, and burn the kindlier brutes alive.

Brutes, the brutes are not your wrongers—burnt at midnight, found at morn,
Twisted hard in mortal agony with their offspring, born-unborn,

Clinging to the silent mother! Are we devils? are we men?
Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here again,

He that in his Catholic wholeness used to call the very flowers
Sisters, brothers—and the beasts—whose pains are hardly less than ours!

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! who can tell how all will end?
Read the wide world's annals, you, and take their wisdom for your friend.

Hope the best, but hold the Present fatal daughter of the Past,
Shape your heart to front the hour, but dream not that the hour will last.

Ay, if dynamite and revolver leave you courage to be wise:
When was age so cramm'd with menace? madness? written, spoken lies?

Envy wears the mask of Love, and, laughing sober fact to scorn,
Cries to Weakest as to Strongest, 'Ye are equals, equal-born.'

Equal-born? O yes, if yonder hill be level with the flat.
Charm us, Orator, till the Lion look no larger than the Cat,

Till the Cat thro' that mirage of overheated language loom
Larger than the Lion,—Demos end in working its own doom.

Russia bursts our Indian barrier, shall we fight her? shall we yield?
Pause! before you sound the trumpet, hear the voices from the field.

Those three hundred millions under one Imperial sceptre now,
Shall we hold them? shall we loose them? take the suffrage of the plow.

Nay, but these would feel and follow Truth if only you and you,
Rivals of realm-ruining party, when you speak were wholly true.

Plowmen, Shepherds, have I found, and more than once, and still could find
Sons of God, and kings of men in utter nobleness of mind,

Truthful, trustful, looking upward to the practised hustings-liar;
So the Higher wields the Lower, while the Lower is the Higher.

Here and there a cotter's babe is royal-born by right divine;
Here and there my lord is lower than his oxen or his swine.

Chaos, Cosmos! Cosmos, Chaos! once again the sickening game;
Freedom, free to slay herself, and dying while they shout her name.

Step by step we gain'd a freedom known to Europe, known to all ;
Step by step we rose to greatness,—thro' the tonguesters we may fall.

You that woo the Voices—tell them 'old experience is a fool,'
Teach your flatter'd kings that only those who cannot read can rule.

Pluck the mighty from their seat, but set no meek ones in their place ;
Pillory Wisdom in your markets, pelt your offal at her face.

Tumble Nature heel o'er head, and, yelling with the yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain and swear the brain is in the feet.

Bring the old dark ages back without the faith, without the hope,
Break the State, the Church, the Throne, and roll their ruins down the slope.

Authors—essayist, atheist, novelist, realist, rhymester, play your part,
Paint the mortal shame of nature with the living hues of Art.

Rip your brothers' vices open, strip your own foul passions bare ;
Down with Reticence, down with Reverence—forward—naked—let them stare.

Feed the budding rose of boyhood with the drainage of your sewer ;
Send the drain into the fountain, lest the stream should issue pure.

Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism,—
Forward, forward, ay and backward, downward too into the abysm.

Do your best to charm the worst, to lower the rising race of men ;
Have we risen from out the beast, then back into the beast again ?

Only 'dust to dust' for me that sicken at your lawless din,
Dust in wholesome old-world dust before the newer world begin.

Heated am I ? you—you wonder—well, it scarce becomes mine age—
Patience ! let the dying actor mouth his last upon the stage.

Cries of unprogressive dotage ere the dotard fall asleep ?
Noises of a current narrowing, not the music of a deep ?

Ay, for doubtless I am old, and think gray thoughts, for I am gray :
After all the stormy changes shall we find a changeless May ?

After madness, after massacre, Jacobinism and Jacquerie,
Some diviner force to guide us thro' the days I shall not see ?

When the schemes and all the systems, Kingdoms and Republics fall,
Something kindlier, higher, holier—all for each and each for all ?

All the full-brain, half-brain races, led by Justice, Love, and Truth ;
All the millions one at length with all the visions of my youth ?

All diseases quench'd by Science, no man halt, or deaf or blind ;
Stronger ever born of weaker, lustier body, larger mind ?

Earth at last a warless world, a single race, a single tongue—
I have seen her far away—for is not Earth as yet so young?—

Every tiger madness muzzled, every serpent passion kill'd,
Every grim ravine a garden, every blazing desert till'd,

Robed in universal harvest up to either pole she smiles,
Universal ocean softly washing all her warless Isles.

Warless? when her tens are thousands, and her thousands millions, then—
All her harvest all too narrow—who can fancy warless men?

Warless? war will die out late then. Will it ever? late or soon?
Can it, till this outworn earth be dead as yon dead world the moon?

Dead the new astronomy calls her. . . . On this day and at this hour,
In this gap between the sandhills, whence you see the Locksley tower,

Here we met, our latest meeting—Amy—sixty years ago—
She and I—the moon was falling greenish thro' a rosy glow,

Just above the gateway tower, and even where you see her now—
Here we stood and claspt each other, swore the seeming-deathless vow. . . .

Dead, but how her living glory lights the hall, the dune, the grass!
Yet the moonlight is the sunlight, and the sun himself will pass.

Venus near her! smiling downward at this earthlier earth of ours,
Closer on the Sun, perhaps a world of never fading flowers.

Hesper, whom the poet call'd the Bringer home of all good things.
All good things may move in Hesper, perfect peoples, perfect kings.

Hesper—Venus—were we native to that splendour or in Mars,
We should see the Globe we groan in, fairest of their evening stars.

Could we dream of wars and carnage, craft and madness, lust and spite,
Roaring London, raving Paris, in that point of peaceful light?

Might we not in glancing heavenward on a star so silver-fair,
Yearn, and clasp the hands and murmur, 'Would to God that we were there'?

Forward, backward, backward, forward, in the immeasurable sea,
Sway'd by vaster ebbs and flows than can be known to you or me.

All the suns—are these but symbols of innumerable man,
Man or Mind that sees a shadow of the planner or the plan?

Is there evil but on earth? or pain in every peopled sphere?
Well be grateful for the sounding watchword 'Evolution' here,

Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.

What are men that He should heed us? cried the king of sacred song;
Insects of an hour, that hourly work their brother insect wrong,

While the silent Heavens roll, and Suns along their fiery way,
All their planets whirling round them, flash a million miles a day.

Many an *Æon* moulded earth before her highest, man, was born,
Many an *Æon* too may pass when earth is manless and forlorn,

Earth so huge, and yet so bounded—pools of salt, and plots of land—
Shallow skin of green and azure—chains of mountain, grains of sand!

Only That which made us, meant us to be mightier by and by,
Set the sphere of all the boundless Heavens within the human eye,

Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro' the human soul;
Boundless inward, in the atom, boundless outward, in the Whole.

* * * * *

Here is Locksley Hall, my grandson, here the lion-guarded gate.
Not to-night in Locksley Hall—to-morrow—you, you come so late.

Wreck'd—your train—or all but wreck'd? a shatter'd wheel? a vicious boy!
Good, this forward, you that preach it, is it well to wish you joy?

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the Time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

There among the glooming alleys Progress halts on palsied feet,
Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

There the Master scrimps his haggard sempstress of her daily bread,
There a single sordid attic holds the living and the dead.

There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest in the warrens of the poor.

Nay, your pardon, cry your 'forward,' yours are hope and youth, but I—
Eighty winters leave the dog too lame to follow with the cry,

Lame and old, and past his time, and passing now into the night;
Yet I would the rising race were half as eager for the light.

Light the fading gleam of Even? light the glimmer of the dawn?
Aged eyes may take the growing glimmer for the gleam withdrawn.

Far away beyond her myriad coming changes earth will be
Something other than the wildest modern guess of you and me.

Earth may reach her earthly-worst, or if she gain her earthly-best,
Would she find her human offspring this ideal man at rest?

Forward then, but still remember how the course of Time will swerve,
Crook and turn upon itself in many a backward streaming curve.

Not the Hall to-night, my grandson ! Death and Silence hold their own.
Leave the Master in the first dark hour of his last sleep alone.

Worthier soul was he than I am, sound and honest, rustic Squire,
Kindly landlord, boon companion—youthful jealousy is a liar.

Cast the poison from your bosom, oust the madness from your brain.
Let the trampled serpent show you that you have not lived in vain.

Youthful ! youth and age are scholars yet but in the lower school,
Nor is he the wisest man who never proved himself a fool.

Yonder lies our young sea-village—Art and Grace are less and less :
Science grows and Beauty dwindles—roofs of slated hideousness !

There is one old Hostel left us where they swing the Locksley shield,
Till the peasant cow shall butt the ' Lion passant ' from his field.

Poor old Heraldry, poor old History, poor old Poetry, passing hence,
In the common deluge drowning old political common-sense !

Poor old voice of eighty crying after voices that have fled !
All I loved are vanish'd voices, all my steps are on the dead.

All the world is ghost to me, and as the phantom disappears,
Forward far and far from here is all the hope of eighty years.

* * * * * *

In this Hostel—I remember—I repent it o'er his grave—
Like a clown—by chance he met me—I refused the hand he gave.

From that casement where the trailer mantles all the mouldering bricks—
I was then in early boyhood, Edith but a child of six—

While I shelter'd in this archway from a day of driving showers—
Peept the winsome face of Edith like a flower among the flowers.

Here to-night ! the Hall to-morrow, when they toll the Chapel bell !
Shall I hear in one dark room a wailing, ' I have loved thee well.'

Then a peal that shakes the portal—one has come to claim his bride,
Her that shrank, and put me from her, shriek'd, and started from my side—

Silent echoes ! You, my Leonard, use and not abuse your day,
Move among your people, know them, follow him who led the way,

Strove for sixty widow'd years to help his homelier brother men,
Served the poor, and built the cottage, raised the school, and drain'd the fen.

Hears he now the Voice that wrong'd him ? who shall swear it cannot be ?
Earth would never touch her worst, were one in fifty such as he.

Ere she gain her Heavenly-best, a God must mingle with the game :
Nay, there may be those about us whom we neither see nor name,

Felt within us as ourselves, the Powers of Good, the Powers of Ill,
Strowing balm, or shedding poison in the fountains of the Will.

Follow you the Star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine.
Forward, till you see the highest Human Nature is divine.

Follow Light, and do the Right—for man can half-control his doom—
Till you find the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb.

Forward, let the stormy moment fly and mingle with the Past.
I that loathed, have come to love him. Love will conquer at the last.

Gone at eighty, mine own age, and I and you will bear the pall;
Then I leave thee Lord and Master, latest Lord of Locksley Hall.

PROLOGUE TO GENERAL HAMLEY

Our birches yellowing and from each
The light leaf falling fast,
While squirrels from our fiery beech
Were bearing off the mast,
You came, and look'd and loved the view
Long-known and loved by me,
Green Sussex fading into blue
With one gray glimpse of sea;
And, gazing from this height alone,
We spoke of what had been
Most marvellous in the wars your own
Crimean eyes had seen;
And now—like old-world inns that take
Some warrior for a sign
That therewithin a guest may make
True cheer with honest wine—
Because you heard the lines I read
Nor utter'd word of blame,
I dare without your leave to head
These rhymings with your name,
Who know you but as one of those
I fain would meet again,
Yet know you, as your England knows
That you and all your men
Were soldiers to her heart's desire
When, in the vanish'd year,
You saw the league-long rampart-fire
Flare from Tel-el-Kebir
Thro' darkness, and the foe was driven,
And Wolseley overthrew
Arâbi, and the stars in heaven
Paled, and the glory grew.

THE CHARGE OF THE HEAVY BRIGADE AT BALACLAVA

OCTOBER 25, 1854

I

THE charge of the gallant three hundred,
the Heavy Brigade!
Down the hill, down the hill, thousands
of Russians,
Thousands of horsemen, drew to the
valley—and stay'd;
For Scarlett and Scarlett's three hundred
were riding by
When the points of the Russian lances
arose in the sky;
And he call'd 'Left wheel into line!'
and they wheel'd and obey'd.
Then he look'd at the host that had
halted he knew not why,
And he turn'd half round, and he had his
trumpeter sound
To the charge, and he rode on ahead, as
he waved his blade
To the gallant three hundred whose glory
will never die—
'Follow,' and up the hill, up the hill, up
the hill,
Follow'd the Heavy Brigade.

II

The trumpet, the gallop, the charge,
and the might of the fight!

Thousands of horsemen had gather'd
 there on the height,
 With a wing push'd out to the left and
 a wing to the right,
 And who shall escape if they close? but
 he dash'd up alone
 Thro' the great gray slope of men,
 Sway'd his sabre, and held his own
 Like an Englishman there and then;
 All in a moment follow'd with force
 Three that were next in their fiery
 course,
 Wedged themselves in between horse
 and horse,
 Fought for their lives in the narrow gap
 they had made—
 Four amid thousands! and up the hill,
 up the hill,
 Gallopt the gallant three hundred, the
 Heavy Brigade.

III

Fell like a cannonshot,
 Burst like a thunderbolt,
 Crash'd like a hurricane,
 Broke thro' the mass from below,
 Drove thro' the midst of the foe,
 Plunged up and down, to and fro,
 Rode flashing blow upon blow,
 Brave Inniskillens and Greys
 Whirling their sabres in circles of light!
 And some of us, all in amaze,
 Who were held for a while from the
 fight,
 And were only standing at gaze,
 When the dark-muffled Russian crowd
 Folded its wings from the left and the
 right,
 And roll'd them around like a cloud,—
 O mad for the charge and the battle
 were we,
 When our own good redcoats sank from
 sight,
 Like drops of blood in a dark-gray
 sea,
 And we turn'd to each other, whispering,
 all dismay'd,
 'Lost are the gallant three hundred of
 Scarlett's Brigade!'

IV

'Lost one and all' were the words
 Mutter'd in our dismay;
 But they rode like Victors and Lords
 Thro' the forest of lances and swords
 In the heart of the Russian hordes,
 They rode, or they stood at bay—
 Struck with the sword-hand and slew,
 Down with the bridle-hand drew
 The foe from the saddle and threw
 Underfoot there in the fray—
 Ranged like a storm or stood like a rock
 In the wave of a stormy day;
 Till suddenly shock upon shock
 Stagger'd the mass from without,
 Drove it in wild disarray,
 For our men gallopt up with a cheer and
 a shout,
 And the foeman surged, and waver'd, and
 reel'd
 Up the hill, up the hill, up the hill, out
 of the field,
 And over the brow and away.

V

Glory to each and to all, and the charge
 that they made!
 Glory to all the three hundred, and all
 the Brigade!

NOTE.—The 'three hundred' of the 'Heavy Brigade' who made this famous charge were the Scots Greys and the 2nd squadron of Inniskillings; the remainder of the 'Heavy Brigade' subsequently dashing up to their support.

The 'three' were Scarlett's aide-de-camp, Elliot, and the trumpeter and Shegog the orderly, who had been close behind him.

EPILOGUE

IRENE

NOT this way will you set your name
 A star among the stars.

POET

What way?

IRENE

You praise when you should blame
The barbarism of wars.
A juster epoch has begun.

POET

Yet tho' this cheek be gray,
And that bright hair the modern sun,
Those eyes the blue to-day,
You wrong me, passionate little friend.
I would that wars should cease,
I would the globe from end to end
Might sow and reap in peace,
And some new Spirit o'erbear the old,
Or Trade re-frain the Powers
From war with kindly links of gold,
Or Love with wreaths of flowers.
Slav, Teuton, Kelt, I count them all
My friends and brother souls,
With all the peoples, great and small,
That wheel between the poles.
But since, our mortal shadow, Ill
To waste this earth began—
Perchance from some abuse of Will
In worlds before the man
Involving ours—he needs must fight
To make true peace his own,
He needs must combat might with might,
Or Might would rule alone ;
And who loves War for War's own sake
Is fool, or crazed, or worse ;
But let the patriot-soldier take
His meed of fame in verse ;
Nay—tho' that realm were in the wrong
For which her warriors bleed,
It still were right to crown with song
The warrior's noble deed—
A crown the Singer hopes may last,
For so the deed endures ;
But Song will vanish in the Vast ;
And that large phrase of yours
'A Star among the stars,' my dear,
Is girlish talk at best ;
For dare we dally with the sphere
As he did half in jest,
Old Horace ? 'I will strike' said he
'The stars with head sublime,'
But scarce could see, as now we see,
The man in Space and Time,

So drew perchance a happier lot
Than ours, who rhyme to-day.
The fires that arch this dusky dot—
Yon myriad-worlded way—
The vast sun-clusters' gather'd blaze,
World-isles in lonely skies,
Whole heavens within themselves, amaze
Our brief humanities ;
And so does Earth ; for Homer's fame,
Tho' carved in harder stone—
The falling drop will make his name
As mortal as my own.

IRENE

No !

POET

Let it live then—ay, till when ?
Earth passes, all is lost
In what they prophesy, our wise men,
Sun-flame or sunless frost,
And deed and song alike are swept
Away, and all in vain
As far as man can see, except
The man himself remain ;
And tho', in this lean age forlorn,
Too many a voice may cry
That man can have no after-morn,
Not yet of these am I.
The man remains, and whatsoe'er
He wrought of good or brave
Will mould him thro' the cycle-year
That dawns behind the grave.

And here the Singer for his Art
Not all in vain may plead
'The song that nerves a nation's heart,
Is in itself a deed.'

TO VIRGIL

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF THE
MANTUANS FOR THE NINETEENTH
CENTENARY OF VIRGIL'S DEATH

I

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire,

Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's
pyre ;

II

Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the Works
and Days,
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden
phrase ;

III

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse
and herd ;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word ;

IV

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen
bowers ;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd
bound with flowers ;

V

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea ;

VI

Thou that seest Universal
Nature moved by Universal
Mind ;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human
kind ;

VII

Light among the vanish'd ages ;
star that gildest yet this phantom
shore ;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise
no more ;

VIII

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
fallen every purple Caesar's
dome—
Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm
sound for ever of Imperial
Rome—

IX

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
and the Rome of freemen holds
her place,
I, from out the Northern Island
sunder'd once from all the human
race,

X

I salute thee, Mantovano,
I that loved thee since my day
began,
Wielder of the stateliest measure
ever moulded by the lips of man.

THE DEAD PROPHET

182—

I

DEAD !
And the Muses cried with a stormy cry
' Send them no more, for evermore.
Let the people die.'

II

Dead !
' Is it *he* then brought so low ?'
And a careless people flock'd from the
fields
With a purse to pay for the show.

III

Dead, who had served his time,
Was one of the people's kings,
Had labour'd in lifting them out of slime,
And showing them, souls have wings !

IV

Dumb on the winter heath he lay.
 His friends had stript him bare,
 And roll'd his nakedness everyway
 That all the crowd might stare.

V

A storm-worn signpost not to be read,
 And a tree with a moulder'd nest
 On its barkless bones, stood stark by the
 dead ;
 And behind him, low in the West,

VI

With shifting ladders of shadow and light,
 And blurr'd in colour and form,
 The sun hung over the gates of Night,
 And glared at a coming storm.

VII

Then glided a vulturous Beldam forth,
 That on dumb death had thriven ;
 They call'd her 'Reverence' here upon
 earth,
 And 'The Curse of the Prophet' in
 Heaven.

VIII

She knelt—'We worship him'—all but
 wept—
 'So great so noble was he !'
 She clear'd her sight, she arose, she swept
 The dust of earth from her knee.

IX

'Great ! for he spoke and the people
 heard,
 And his eloquence caught like a flame
 From zone to zone of the world, till his
 Word
 Had won him a noble name.

X

'Noble ! he sung, and the sweet sound ran
 Thro' palace and cottage door,
 For he touch'd on the whole sad planet
 of man,
 The kings and the rich and the poor ;

XI

'And he sung not alone of an old sun set,
 But a sun coming up in his youth !
 Great and noble—O yes—but yet—
 For man is a lover of Truth,

XII

'And bound to follow, wherever she go
 Stark-naked, and up or down,
 Thro' her high hill-passes of stainless
 snow,
 Or the foulest sewer of the town—

XIII

'Noble and great—O ay—but then,
 Tho' a prophet should have his due,
 Was he noblier-fashion'd than other men ?
 Shall we see to it, I and you ?

XIV

'For since he would sit on a Prophet's
 seat,
 As a lord of the Human soul,
 We needs must scan him from head to
 feet
 Were it but for a wart or a mole ?'

XV

His wife and his child stood by him in
 tears,
 But she—she push'd them aside.
 'Tho' a name may last for a thousand
 years,
 Yet a truth is a truth,' she cried.

XVI

And she that had haunted his pathway
 still,
 Had often truckled and cower'd
 When he rose in his wrath, and had
 yielded her will
 To the master, as overpower'd,

XVII

She tumbled his helpless corpse about.
 'Small blemish upon the skin !
 But I think we know what is fair without
 Is often as foul within.'

XVIII

She crouch'd, she tore him part from part,
 And out of his body she drew
 The red 'Blood-eagle'¹ of liver and
 heart ;
 She held them up to the view ;

XIX

She gabbled, as she groped in the dead,
 And all the people were pleased ;
 ' See, what a little heart,' she said,
 ' And the liver is half-diseased !'

XX

She tore the Prophet after death,
 And the people paid her well.
 Lightnings flicker'd along the heath ;
 One shriek'd ' The fires of Hell !'

EARLY SPRING

I

ONCE more the Heavenly Power
 Makes all things new,
 And domes the red-plow'd hills
 With loving blue ;
 The blackbirds have their wills,
 The throistles too.

II

Opens a door in Heaven ;
 From skies of glass
 A Jacob's ladder falls
 On greening grass,
 And o'er the mountain-walls
 Young angels pass.

III

Before them fleets the shower,
 And burst the buds,
 And shine the level lands,
 And flash the floods ;
 The stars are from their hands
 Flung thro' the woods,

¹ Old Viking term for lungs, liver, etc., when torn by the conqueror out of the body of the conquered.

IV

The woods with living airs
 How softly fann'd,
 Light airs from where the deep,
 All down the sand,
 Is breathing in his sleep,
 Heard by the land.

V

O follow, leaping blood,
 The season's lure !
 O heart, look down and up
 Serene, secure,
 Warm as the crocus cup,
 Like snowdrops, pure !

VI

Past, Future glimpse and fade
 Thro' some slight spell,
 A gleam from yonder vale,
 Some far blue fell,
 And sympathies, how frail,
 In sound and smell !

VII

Till at thy chuckled note,
 Thou twinkling bird,
 The fairy fancies range,
 And, lightly stirr'd,
 Ring little bells of change
 From word to word.

VIII

For now the Heavenly Power
 Makes all things new,
 And thaws the cold, and fills
 The flower with dew ;
 The blackbirds have their wills,
 The poets too.

PREFATORY POEM TO MY BROTHER'S SONNETS

Midnight, June 30, 1879

I

MIDNIGHT—in no midsummer tune
 The breakers lash the shores :

The cuckoo of a joyless June
Is calling out of doors :

And thou hast vanish'd from thine own
To that which looks like rest,
True brother, only to be known
By those who love thee best.

II

Midnight—and joyless June gone by,
And from the deluged park
The cuckoo of a worse July
Is calling thro' the dark :

But thou art silent underground,
And o'er thee streams the rain,
True poet, surely to be found
When Truth is found again.

III

And, now to these unsummer'd skies
The summer bird is still,
Far off a phantom cuckoo cries
From out a phantom hill ;

And thro' this midnight breaks the sun
Of sixty years away,
The light of days when life begun,
The days that seem to-day,

When all my griefs were shared with thee,
As all my hopes were thine—
As all thou wert was one with me,
May all thou art be mine !

'FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE'

Row us out from Desenzano, to your
Sirmione row !
So they row'd, and there we landed—'O
venusta Sirmio !'
There to me thro' all the groves of olive
in the summer glow,
There beneath the Roman ruin where the
purple flowers grow,
Came that 'Ave atque Vale' of the Poet's
hopeless woe,
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen-
hundred years ago,

'Frater Ave atque Vale'—as we wander'd
to and fro

Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the
Garda Lake below

Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-
silvery Sirmio !

HELEN'S TOWER¹

HELEN'S TOWER, here I stand,
Dominant over sea and land.
Son's love built me, and I hold
Mother's love in letter'd gold.
Love is in and out of time,
I am mortal stone and lime.
Would my granite girth were strong
As either love, to last as long !
I should wear my crown entire
To and thro' the Doomsday fire,
And be found of angel eyes
In earth's recurring Paradise.

EPITAPH ON LORD STRAT-
FORD DE REDCLIFFE

IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY

THOU third great Canning, stand among
our best
And noblest, now thy long day's work
hath ceased,
Here silent in our Minster of the West
Who wert the voice of England in the
East.

EPITAPH
ON GENERAL GORDONIN THE GORDON BOYS' NATIONAL
MEMORIAL HOME NEAR WOKING

WARRIOR of God, man's friend, and
tyrant's foe,
Now somewhere dead far in the waste
Soudan,
Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
This earth has never borne a nobler
man.

¹ Written at the request of my friend, Lord
Dufferin.

EPITAPH ON CAXTON

IN ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER

FIAT LUX (his motto)

THY prayer was 'Light—more Light—
while Time shall last !'
Thou sawest a glory growing on the night,
But not the shadows which that light
would cast,
Till shadows vanish in the Light of Light.

TO THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

O PATRIOT Statesman, be thou wise to
know
The limits of resistance, and the bounds
Determining concession ; still be bold
Not only to slight praise but suffer scorn ;
And be thy heart a fortress to maintain
The day against the moment, and the
year
Against the day ; thy voice, a music
heard
Thro' all the yells and counter-yells of
feud
And faction, and thy will, a power to
make
This ever-changing world of circumstance,
In changing, chime with never-changing
Law.

HANDS ALL ROUND

FIRST pledge our Queen this solemn
night,
Then drink to England, every guest ;
That man's the best Cosmopolite
Who loves his native country best.
May freedom's oak for ever live
With stronger life from day to day ;
That man's the true Conservative
Who lops the moulder'd branch away.
Hands all round !
God the traitor's hope confound !

To this great cause of Freedom drink,
my friends,
And the great name of England, round
and round.

To all the loyal hearts who long
To keep our English Empire whole !
To all our noble sons, the strong
New England of the Southern Pole !
To England under Indian skies,
To those dark millions of her realm !
To Canada whom we love and prize,
Whatever statesman hold the helm.
Hands all round !
God the traitor's hope confound !
To this great name of England drink,
my friends,
And all her glorious empire, round and
round.

To all our statesmen so they be
True leaders of the land's desire !
To both our Houses, may they see
Beyond the borough and the shire !
We sail'd wherever ship could sail,
We founded many a mighty state ;
Pray God our greatness may not fail
Thro' craven fears of being great.
Hands all round !
God the traitor's hope confound !
To this great cause of Freedom drink,
my friends,
And the great name of England, round
and round.

FREEDOM

I

O THOU so fair in summers gone,
While yet thy fresh and virgin soul
Inform'd the pillar'd Parthenon,
The glittering Capitol ;

II

So fair in southern sunshine bathed,
But scarce of such majestic mien
As here with forehead vapour-swathed
In meadows ever green ;

III

For thou—when Athens reign'd and
Rome,
Thy glorious eyes were dimm'd with
pain
To mark in many a freeman's home
The slave, the scourge, the chain ;

IV

O follower of the Vision, still
In motion to the distant gleam,
Howe'er blind force and brainless will
May jar thy golden dream

V

Of Knowledge fusing class with class,
Of civic Hate no more to be,
Of Love to leaven all the mass,
Till every Soul be free ;

VI

Who yet, like Nature, wouldst not mar
By changes all too fierce and fast
This order of Her Human Star,
This heritage of the past ;

VII

O scorner of the party cry
That wanders from the public good,
Thou—when the nations rear on high
Their idol smear'd with blood,

VIII

And when they roll their idol down—
Of saner worship sanely proud ;
Thou loather of the lawless crown
As of the lawless crowd ;

IX

How long thine ever-growing mind
Hath still'd the blast and strown the
wave,
Tho' some of late would raise a wind
To sing thee to thy grave,

X

Men loud against all forms of power—
Unfurnish'd brows, tempestuous
tongues—
Expecting all things in an hour—
Brass mouths and iron lungs !

TO H.R.H. PRINCESS
BEATRICE

Two Suns of Love make day of human
life,
Which else with all its pains, and griefs,
and deaths,
Were utter darkness—one, the Sun of
dawn
That brightens thro' the Mother's tender
eyes,
And warms the child's awakening world
—and one
The later-rising Sun of spousal Love,
Which from her household orbit draws
the child
To move in other spheres. The Mother
weeps
At that white funeral of the single life,
Her maiden daughter's marriage ; and
her tears
Are half of pleasure, half of pain—the
child
Is happy—ev'n in leaving *her* ! but Thou,
True daughter, whose all-faithful, filial
eyes
Have seen the loneliness of earthly thrones,
Wilt neither quit the widow'd Crown
nor let
This later light of Love have risen in vain,
But moving thro' the Mother's home,
between
The two that love thee, lead a summer
life,
Sway'd by each Love, and swaying to
each Love,
Like some conjectured planet in mid
heaven
Between two Suns, and drawing down
from both
The light and genial warmth of double day,

THE FLEET¹

I

You, you, *if* you shall fail to understand

What England is, and what her all-in-all,

On you will come the curse of all the land,

Should this old England fall
Which Nelson left so great.

¹ The speaker said that 'he should like to be assured that other outlying portions of the Empire, the Crown colonies, and important coaling stations were being as promptly and as thoroughly fortified as the various capitals of the self-governing colonies. He was credibly informed this was not so. It was impossible, also, not to feel some degree of anxiety about the efficacy of present provision to defend and protect, by means of swift well-armed cruisers, the immense mercantile fleet of the Empire. A third source of anxiety, so far as the colonies were concerned, was the apparently insufficient provision for the rapid manufacture of armaments and their prompt despatch when ordered to their colonial destination. Hence the necessity for manufacturing appliances equal to the requirements, not of Great Britain alone, but of the whole Empire. But the keystone of the whole was the necessity for an overwhelmingly powerful fleet and efficient defence for all necessary coaling stations. This was as essential for the colonies as for Great Britain. It was the one condition for the continuance of the Empire. All that Continental Powers did with respect to armies England should effect with her navy. It was essentially a defensive force, and could be moved rapidly from point to point, but it should be equal to all that was expected from it. It was to strengthen the fleet that colonists would first readily tax themselves, because they realised how essential a powerful fleet was to the safety, not only of that extensive commerce sailing in every sea, but ultimately to the security of the distant portions of the Empire. Who could estimate the loss involved in even a brief period of disaster to the Imperial Navy? Any amount of money timely expended in preparation would be quite insignificant when compared with the possible calamity he had referred to.'—*Extract from Sir Graham Berry's Speech at the Colonial Institute, 9th November 1886.*

II

His isle, the mightiest Ocean-power on earth,

Our own fair isle, the lord of every sea—
Her fuller franchise—what would that be worth—

Her ancient fame of Free—
Were she . . . a fallen state?

III

Her dauntless army scatter'd, and so small,

Her island-myriads fed from alien lands—

The fleet of England is her all-in-all;

Her fleet is in your hands,
And in her fleet her Fate.

IV

You, you, that have the ordering of her fleet,

If you should only compass her disgrace,

When all men starve, the wild mob's million feet

Will kick you from your place,
But then too late, too late.

OPENING OF THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION BY THE QUEEN

*Written at the Request of the Prince
of Wales*

I

WELCOME, welcome with one voice!

In your welfare we rejoice,
Sons and brothers that have sent,
From isle and cape and continent,
Produce of your field and flood,
Mount and mine, and primal wood;
Works of subtle brain and hand,
And splendours of the morning land,
Gifts from every British zone;

Britons, hold your own!

II

May we find, as ages run,
 The mother featured in the son ;
 And may yours for ever be
 That old strength and constancy
 Which has made your fathers great
 In our ancient island State,
 And wherever her flag fly,
 Glorying between sea and sky,
 Makes the might of Britain known ;
 Britons, hold your own !

III

Britain fought her sons of yore—
 Britain fail'd ; and never more,
 Careless of our growing kin,
 Shall we sin our fathers' sin,
 Men that in a narrower day—
 Unprophetic rulers they—
 Drove from out the mother's nest
 That young eagle of the West
 To forage for herself alone ;
 Britons, hold your own !

IV

Sharers of our glorious past,
 Brothers, must we part at last ?
 Shall we not thro' good and ill
 Cleave to one another still ?
 Britain's myriad voices call,
 ' Sons, be welded each and all,
 Into one imperial whole,
 One with Britain, heart and soul !
 One life, one flag, one fleet, one Throne !'
 Britons, hold your own !

POETS AND THEIR BIBLIO- GRAPHIES

OLD poets foster'd under friendlier skies,
 Old Virgil who would write ten lines,
 they say,
 At dawn, and lavish all the golden
 day
 To make them wealthier in his readers'
 eyes ;

And you, old popular Horace, you the
 wise

Adviser of the nine-years-ponder'd lay,
 And you, that wear a wreath of sweeter
 bay,

Catullus, whose dead songster never dies ;
 If, glancing downward on the kindly
 sphere

That once had roll'd you round and
 round the Sun,

You see your Art still shrined in
 human shelves,

You should be jubilant that you flourish'd
 here

Before the Love of Letters, overdone,
 Had swampt the sacred poets with
 themselves.

TO W. C. MACREADY

1851

FAREWELL, Macready, since to-night we
 part ;

Full-handed thunders often have
 confessed

Thy power, well-used to move the
 public breast.

We thank thee with our voice, and from
 the heart.

Farewell, Macready, since this night we
 part,

Go, take thine honours home ; rank
 with the best,

Garrick and statelier Kemble, and
 the rest

Who made a nation purer through their
 art.

Thine is it that our drama did not die,
 Nor flicker down to brainless panto-
 mime,

And those gilt gauds men-children
 swarm to see.

Farewell, Macready ; moral, grave,
 sublime ;

Our Shakespeare's bland and universal
 eye

Dwells pleased, through twice a
 hundred years, on thee.

QUEEN MARY

A DRAMA

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

QUEEN MARY.

PHILIP, *King of Naples and Sicily, afterwards King of Spain.*

THE PRINCESS ELIZABETH.

REGINALD POLE, *Cardinal and Papal Legate.*

SIMON RENARD, *Spanish Ambassador.*

LE SIEUR DE NOAILLES, *French Ambassador.*

THOMAS CRANMER, *Archbishop of Canterbury.*

SIR NICHOLAS HEATH, *Archbishop of York; Lord Chancellor after Gardiner.*

EDWARD COURTENAY, *Earl of Devon.*

LORD WILLIAM HOWARD, *afterwards Lord Howard, and Lord High Admiral.*

LORD WILLIAMS OF THAME. LORD PAGET. LORD PETRE.

STEPHEN GARDINER, *Bishop of Winchester and Lord Chancellor.*

EDMUND BONNER, *Bishop of London.* THOMAS THIRLBV, *Bishop of Ely.*

SIR THOMAS WYATT } *Insurrectionary Leaders.*

SIR THOMAS STAFFORD }

SIR RALPH BAGENHALL. SIR ROBERT SOUTHWELL.

SIR HENRY BEDINGFIELD. SIR WILLIAM CECIL.

SIR THOMAS WHITE, *Lord Mayor of London.*

THE DUKE OF ALVA } *attending on Philip.*

THE COUNT DE FERIA }

PETER MARTYR. FATHER COLE. FATHER BOURNE.

VILLA GARCIA. SOTO.

CAPTAIN BRETT } *Adherents of Wyatt.*

ANTHONY KNYVETT }

PETERS, *Gentleman of Lord Howard.*

ROGER, *Servant to Noailles.* WILLIAM, *Servant to Wyatt.*

STEWARD OF HOUSEHOLD *to the Princess Elizabeth.*

OLD NOKES and NOKES.

MARCHIONESS OF EXETER, *Mother of Courtenay.*

LADY CLARENCE

LADY MAGDALEN DACRES } *Ladies in Waiting to the Queen.*

ALICE

MAID OF HONOUR *to the Princess Elizabeth.*

JOAN } *two Country Wives.*

TIB

Lords and other Attendants, Members of the Privy Council, Members of Parliament, Two Gentlemen, Aldermen, Citizens, Peasants, Ushers, Messengers, Guards, Pages, Gospellers, Marshalmen, etc.

ACT I

SCENE I.—ALDGATE RICHLY DECORATED

CROWD. MARSHALMEN

Marshalman. Stand back, keep a clear lane! When will her Majesty pass, sayst thou? why now, even now; wherefore draw back your heads and your

horns before I break them, and make what noise you will with your tongues, so it be not treason. Long live Queen Mary, the lawful and legitimate daughter of Harry the Eighth! Shout, knaves!

Citizens. Long live Queen Mary!

First Citizen. That's a hard word, legitimate; what does it mean?

Second Citizen. It means a bastard.

Third Citizen. Nay, it means true-born.

First Citizen. Why, didn't the Parliament make her a bastard?

Second Citizen. No; it was the Lady Elizabeth.

Third Citizen. That was after, man; that was after.

First Citizen. Then which is the bastard?

Second Citizen. Troth, they be both bastards by Act of Parliament and Council.

Third Citizen. Ay, the Parliament can make every true-born man of us a bastard. Old Nokes, can't it make thee a bastard? thou shouldst know, for thou art as white as three Christmasses.

Old Nokes (dreamily). Who's a-passing? King Edward or King Richard?

Third Citizen. No, old Nokes.

Old Nokes. It's Harry!

Third Citizen. It's Queen Mary.

Old Nokes. The blessed Mary's a-passing! [*Falls on his knees.*]

Nokes. Let father alone, my masters! he's past your questioning.

Third Citizen. Answer thou for him, then! thou'rt no such cockerel thyself, for thou was born i' the tail end of old Harry the Seventh.

Nokes. Eh! that was afore bastard-making began. I was born true man at five in the forenoon i' the tail of old Harry, and so they can't make me a bastard.

Third Citizen. But if Parliament can make the Queen a bastard, why, it follows all the more that they can make thee one, who art fray'd i' the knees, and out at elbow, and bald o' the back, and bursten at the toes, and down at heels.

Nokes. I was born of a true man and a ring'd wife, and I can't argue upon it; but I and my old woman 'ud burn upon it, that would we.

Marshalman. What are you cackling of bastardy under the Queen's own nose? I'll have you flogg'd and burnt too, by the Rood I will.

First Citizen. He swears by the Rood. Whew!

Second Citizen. Hark! the trumpets.

[*The Procession passes, Mary and Elizabeth riding side by side, and disappears under the gate.*]

Citizens. Long live Queen Mary! down with all traitors! God save her Grace; and death to Northumberland!

[*Exeunt.*]

Manent TWO GENTLEMEN

First Gentleman. By God's light a noble creature, right royal!

Second Gentleman. She looks comelier than ordinary to-day; but to my mind the Lady Elizabeth is the more noble and royal.

First Gentleman. I mean the Lady Elizabeth. Did you hear (I have a daughter in her service who reported it) that she met the Queen at Wanstead with five hundred horse, and the Queen (tho' some say they be much divided) took her hand, call'd her sweet sister, and kiss'd not her alone, but all the ladies of her following.

Second Gentleman. Ay, that was in her hour of joy; there will be plenty to sunder and unsister them again: this Gardiner for one, who is to be made Lord Chancellor, and will pounce like a wild beast out of his cage to worry Cranmer.

First Gentleman. And furthermore, my daughter said that when there rose a talk of the late rebellion, she spoke even of Northumberland pitifully, and of the good Lady Jane as a poor innocent child who had but obeyed her father; and furthermore, she said that no one in her time should be burnt for heresy.

Second Gentleman. Well, sir, I look for happy times.

First Gentleman. There is but one thing against them. I know not if you know.

Second Gentleman. I suppose you touch upon the rumour that Charles, the master of the world, has offer'd her his son Philip, the Pope and the Devil. I trust it is but a rumour.

First Gentleman. She is going now

to the Tower to loose the prisoners there, and among them Courtenay, to be made Earl of Devon, of royal blood, of splendid feature, whom the Council and all her people wish her to marry. May it be so, for we are many of us Catholics, but few Papists, and the Hot Gospellers will go mad upon it.

Second Gentleman. Was she not betroth'd in her babyhood to the Great Emperor himself?

First Gentleman. Ay, but he's too old.

Second Gentleman. And again to her cousin Reginald Pole, now Cardinal; but I hear that he too is full of aches and broken before his day.

First Gentleman. O, the Pope could dispense with his Cardinalate, and his achage, and his breakage, if that were all: will you not follow the procession?

Second Gentleman. No; I have seen enough for this day.

First Gentleman. Well, I shall follow; if I can get near enough I shall judge with my own eyes whether her Grace incline to this splendid scion of Plantagenet.
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II

A ROOM IN LAMBETH PALACE

Cranmer. To Strasburg, Antwerp, Frankfort, Zurich, Worms, Geneva, Basle—our Bishops from their sees
Or fled, they say, or flying—Poinet, Barlow,
Bale, Scory, Coverdale; besides the Deans
Of Christchurch, Durham, Exeter, and Wells—
Ailmer and Bullingham, and hundreds more;
So they report: I shall be left alone.
No: Hooper, Ridley, Latimer will not fly.

Enter PETER MARTYR

Peter Martyr. Fly, Cranmer! were there nothing else, your name

Stands first of those who sign'd the Letters Patent

That gave her royal crown to Lady Jane.

Cranmer. Stand first it may, but it was written last:

Those that are now her Privy Council, sign'd

Before me: nay, the Judges had pronounced

That our young Edward might bequeath the crown

Of England, putting by his father's will. Yet I stood out, till Edward sent for me.

The wan boy-king, with his fast-fading eyes
Fixt hard on mine, his frail transparent hand,

Damp with the sweat of death, and griping mine,

Whisper'd me, if I loved him, not to yield His Church of England to the Papal wolf
And Mary; then I could no more—sign'd.

Nay, for bare shame of inconsistency, She cannot pass her traitor Council by,
To make me headless.

Peter Martyr. That might be forgiven. I tell you, fly, my Lord. You do not own The bodily presence in the Eucharist,
Their wafer and perpetual sacrifice: Your creed will be your death.

Cranmer. Step after step,
Thro' many voices crying right and left,
Have I climb'd back into the primal church,
And stand within the porch, and Christ with me:

My flight were such a scandal to the faith,
The downfall of so many simple souls,
I dare not leave my post.

Peter Martyr. But you divorced Queen Catharine and her father; hence, her hate
Will burn till you are burn'd.

Cranmer. I cannot help it. The Canonists and Schoolmen were with me.

'Thou shalt not wed thy brother's wife.'—'Tis written,

'They shall be childless.' True, Mary was born,

But France would not accept her for a
bride
As being born from incest ; and this
wrought
Upon the king ; and child by child, you
know,
Were momentary sparkles out as quick
Almost as kindled ; and he brought his
doubts

And fears to me. Peter, I'll swear for him
He *did* believe the bond incestuous.

But wherefore am I trenching on the
time

That should already have seen your steps
a mile

From me and Lambeth ? God be with
you ! Go.

Peter Martyr. Ah, but how fierce a
letter you wrote against
Their superstition when they slander'd
you

For setting up a mass at Canterbury
To please the Queen.

Cranmer. It was a wheedling monk
Set up the mass.

Peter Martyr. I know it, my good
Lord.

But you so bubbled over with hot terms
Of Satan, liars, blasphemy, Antichrist,
She never will forgive you. Fly, my
Lord, fly !

Cranmer. I wrote it, and God grant
me power to burn !

Peter Martyr. They have given me a
safe conduct : for all that

I dare not stay. I fear, I fear, I see you,
Dear friend, for the last time ; farewell,
and fly.

Cranmer. Fly and farewell, and let
me die the death.

[*Exit Peter Martyr.*]

Enter OLD SERVANT

O, kind and gentle master, the Queen's
Officers

Are here in force to take you to the Tower.

Cranmer. Ay, gentle friend, admit
them. I will go.

I thank my God it is too late to fly.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—ST. PAUL'S CROSS

FATHER BOURNE *in the pulpit.* *A crowd.*
MARCHIONESS OF EXETER, COURTE-
NAY. *The SIEUR DE NOAILLES and*
his man ROGER in front of the stage.
Hubbub.

Noailles. Hast thou let fall those
papers in the palace ?

Roger. Ay, sir.

Noailles. 'There will be no peace for
Mary till Elizabeth lose her head.'

Roger. Ay, sir.

Noailles. And the other, 'Long live
Elizabeth the Queen !'

Roger. Ay, sir ; she needs must tread
upon them.

Noailles. Well.

These beastly swine make such a grunting
here,

I cannot catch what Father Bourne is
saying.

Roger. Quiet a moment, my masters ;
hear what the shaveling has to say for
himself.

Crowd. Hush—hear !

Bourne. —and so this unhappy land,
long divided in itself, and sever'd from
the faith, will return into the one true fold,
seeing that our gracious Virgin Queen
hath——

Crowd. No pope ! no pope !

Roger (to those about him, mimicking
Bourne). —hath sent for the holy legate
of the holy father the Pope, Cardinal
Pole, to give us all that holy absolution
which——

First Citizen. Old Bourne to the life !

Second Citizen. Holy absolution ! holy
Inquisition !

Third Citizen. Down with the Papist !
[*Hubbub.*]

Bourne. —and now that your good
bishop, Bonner, who hath lain so long
under bonds for the faith—— [*Hubbub.*]

Noailles. Friend Roger, steal thou in
among the crowd,

And get the swine to shout Elizabeth.

Yon gray old Gospeller, sour as midwinter,
Begin with him.

Roger (goes). By the mass, old friend,
we'll have no pope here while the Lady
Elizabeth lives.

Gospeller. Art thou of the true faith,
fellow, that swearest by the mass?

Roger. Ay, that am I, new converted,
but the old leaven sticks to my tongue
yet.

First Citizen. He says right; by the
mass we'll have no mass here.

Voices of the crowd. Peace! hear him;
let his own words damn the Papist. From
thine own mouth I judge thee—tear him
down!

Bourne. —and since our Gracious
Queen, let me call her our second Virgin
Mary, hath begun to re-edify the true
temple——

First Citizen. Virgin Mary! we'll have
no virgins here—we'll have the Lady
Elizabeth!

[*Swords are drawn, a knife is hurled
and sticks in the pulpit. The mob
throng to the pulpit stairs.*]

Marchioness of Exeter. Son Courtenay,
wilt thou see the holy father
Murdered before thy face? up, son, and
save him!

They love thee, and thou canst not come
to harm.

Courtenay (in the pulpit). Shame,
shame, my masters! are you Eng-
lish-born,

And set yourselves by hundreds against
one?

Crowd. A Courtenay! a Courtenay!
[*A train of Spanish servants crosses
at the back of the stage.*]

Noailles. These birds of passage come
before their time:
Stave off the crowd upon the Spaniard
there.

Roger. My masters, yonder's fatter
game for you
Than this old gaping gurgyle: look you
there—
The Prince of Spain coming to wed our
Queen!

After him, boys! and pelt him from the
city.

[*They seize stones and follow the
Spaniards. Exeunt on the other
side Marchioness of Exeter and
Attendants.*]

Noailles (to Roger). Stand from me.
If Elizabeth lose her head—

That makes for France.

And if her people, anger'd thereupon,
Arise against her and dethrone the Queen—
That makes for France.

And if I breed confusion anyway—
That makes for France.

Good-day, my Lord of Devon;
A bold heart yours to beard that raging
mob!

Courtenay. My mother said, Go up;
and up I went.

I knew they would not do me any wrong,
For I am mighty popular with them,
Noailles.

Noailles. You look'd a king.

Courtenay. Why not? I am
king's blood.

Noailles. And in the whirl of change
may come to be one.

Courtenay. Ah!

Noailles. But does your gracious
Queen entreat you kinglike?

Courtenay. 'Fore God, I think she
entreats me like a child.

Noailles. You've but a dull life in this
maiden court,

I fear, my Lord?

Courtenay. A life of nods and yawns.

Noailles. So you would honour my
poor house to-night,

We might enliven you. Divers honest
fellows,

The Duke of Suffolk lately freed from
prison,

Sir Peter Carew and Sir Thomas Wyatt,
Sir Thomas Stafford, and some more—
we play.

Courtenay. At what?

Noailles. The Game of Chess.

Courtenay. The Game of Chess!
I can play well, and I shall beat you
there.

Noailles. Ay, but we play with Henry,
King of France,
And certain of his court.
His Highness makes his moves across the
Channel,

We answer him with ours, and there are
messengers
That go between us.

Courtenay. Why, such a game, sir,
were whole years a-playing.

Noailles. Nay; not so long I trust.
That all depends

Upon the skill and swiftness of the players.

Courtenay. The King is skilful at it?

Noailles. Very, my Lord.

Courtenay. And the stakes high?

Noailles. But not beyond your means.

Courtenay. Well, I'm the first of
players. I shall win.

Noailles. With our advice and in our
company,

And so you well attend to the king's moves,
I think you may.

Courtenay. When do you meet?

Noailles. To-night.

Courtenay (aside). I will be there; the
fellow's at his tricks—

Deep—I shall fathom him. (*Aloud.*)
Good morning, *Noailles*.

[*Exit Courtenay.*]

Noailles. Good-day, my Lord. Strange
game of chess! a King

That with her own pawns plays against a
Queen,

Whose play is all to find herself a King.

Ay; but this fine blue-blooded *Courtenay*
seems

Too princely for a pawn. Call him a
Knight,

That, with an ass's, not a horse's head,
Skips every way, from levity or from fear.
Well, we shall use him somehow, so that
Gardiner

And Simon Renard spy not out our game
Too early. Roger, thinkest thou that
anyone

Suspected thee to be my man?

Roger. Not one, sir.

Noailles. No! the disguise was perfect.
Let's away. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV

LONDON. A ROOM IN THE PALACE

ELIZABETH. *Enter COURTENAY*

Courtenay. So yet am I,
Unless my friends and mirrors lie to me,
A goodlier-looking fellow than this Philip.
Pah!

The Queen is ill advised: shall I turn
traitor?

They've almost talked me into it: yet the
word

Affrights me somewhat: to be such a one
As Harry Bolingbroke hath a lure in it.

Good now, my Lady Queen, tho' by your
age,

And by your looks you are not worth the
having,

Yet by your crown you are.

[*Seeing Elizabeth.*]

The Princess there?

If I tried her and la—she's amorous.

Have we not heard of her in Edward's
time,

Her freaks and frolics with the late Lord
Admiral?

I do believe she'd yield. I should be
still

A party in 'the state; and then, who
knows—

Elizabeth. What are you musing on,
my Lord of Devon?

Courtenay. Has not the Queen—

Elizabeth. Done what, Sir?

Courtenay. —made you follow

The Lady Suffolk and the Lady Lennox?—
You,

The heir presumptive.

Elizabeth. Why do you ask? you
know it.

Courtenay. You needs must bear it
hardly.

Elizabeth. No, indeed!

I am utterly submissive to the Queen.

Courtenay. Well, I was musing upon
that; the Queen

Is both my foe and yours: we should be
friends.

Elizabeth. My Lord, the hatred of
another to us
Is no true bond of friendship.

Courtenay. Might it not
Be the rough preface of some closer bond?

Elizabeth. My Lord, you late were
loosed from out the Tower,
Where, like a butterfly in a chrysalis,
You spent your life; that broken, out
you flutter
Thro' the new world, go zigzag, now
would settle
Upon this flower, now that; but all things
here

At court are known; you have solicited
The Queen, and been rejected.

Courtenay. Flower, she!
Half faded! but you, cousin, are fresh and
sweet

As the first flower no bee has ever tried.

Elizabeth. Are you the bee to try me?
why, but now
I called you butterfly.

Courtenay. You did me wrong,
I love not to be called a butterfly:
Why do you call me butterfly?

Elizabeth. Why do you go so gay then?

Courtenay. Velvet and gold.
This dress was made me as the Earl of
Devon
To take my seat in; looks it not right
royal?

Elizabeth. So royal that the Queen
forbad you wearing it.

Courtenay. I wear it then to spite her.

Elizabeth. My Lord, my Lord;
I see you in the Tower again. Her
Majesty

Hears you affect the Prince—prelates
kneel to you.—

Courtenay. I am the noblest blood in
Europe, Madam,
A Courtenay of Devon, and her cousin.

Elizabeth. She hears you make your
boast that after all

She means to wed you. Folly, my good
Lord.

Courtenay. How folly? a great party
in the state
Wills me to wed her.

Elizabeth. Failing her, my Lord,
Doth not as great a party in the state
Will you to wed me?

Courtenay. Even so, fair lady.

Elizabeth. You know to flatter ladies.

Courtenay. Nay, I meant
True matters of the heart.

Elizabeth. My heart, my Lord,
Is no great party in the state as yet.

Courtenay. Great, said you? nay, you
shall be great. I love you,
Lay my life in your hands. Can you be
close?

Elizabeth. Can you, my Lord?

Courtenay. Close as a miser's casket.
Listen:

The King of France, Noailles the Am-
bassador,

The Duke of Suffolk and Sir Peter Carew,
Sir Thomas Wyatt, I myself, some
others,

Have sworn this Spanish marriage shall
not be.

If Mary will not hear us—well—conjec-
ture—

Were I in Devon with my wedded bride,
The people there so worship me—Your
ear;

You shall be Queen.

Elizabeth. You speak too low,
my Lord;

I cannot hear you.

Courtenay. I'll repeat it.

Elizabeth. No!
Stand further off, or you may lose your
head.

Courtenay. I have a head to lose for
your sweet sake.

Elizabeth. Have you, my Lord? Best
keep it for your own.

Nay, pout not, cousin.

Not many friends are mine, except indeed
Among the many. I believe you mine;
And so you may continue mine, farewell,
And that at once.

Enter MARY, behind

Mary. Whispering—leagued together
To bar me from my Philip.

Courtenay. Pray—consider—

Elizabeth (seeing the Queen). Well,
that's a noble horse of yours, my
Lord.

I trust that he will carry you well to-day,
And heal your headache.

Courtenay. You are wild ; what head-
ache ?

Heartache, perchance ; not headache.

Elizabeth (*aside to Courtenay*). Are
you blind ?

[*Courtenay sees the Queen and exits.*
Exit Mary.

Enter LORD WILLIAM HOWARD

Howard. Was that my Lord of Devon?
do not you

Be seen in corners with my Lord of
Devon.

He hath fallen out of favour with the
Queen.

She fears the Lords may side with you
and him

Against her marriage ; therefore is he
dangerous.

And if this Prince of fluff and feather
come

To woo you, niece, he is dangerous every-
way.

Elizabeth. Not very dangerous that
way, my good uncle.

Howard. But your own state is full
of danger here.

The disaffected, heretics, reformers,
Look to you as the one to crown their
ends.

Mix not yourself with any plot I pray
you ;

Nay, if by chance you hear of any such,
Speak not thereof—no, not to your best
friend,

Lest you should be confounded with it.
Still—

Perinde ac cadaver—as the priest says,
You know your Latin—quiet as a dead
body.

What was my Lord of Devon telling you?

Elizabeth. Whether he told me any-
thing or not,

I follow your good counsel, gracious uncle.
Quiet as a dead body.

Howard. You do right well.
I do not care to know ; but this I charge
you,

Tell Courtenay nothing. The Lord
Chancellor

(I count it as a kind of virtue in him,
He hath not many), as a mastiff dog
May love a puppy cur for no more reason
Than that the twain have been tied up
together,

Thus Gardiner—for the two were fellow-
prisoners

So many years in yon accursed Tower—
Hath taken to this Courtenay. Look to
it, niece,

He hath no fence when Gardiner ques-
tions him ;

All oozes out ; yet him—because they
know him

The last White Rose, the last Plantagenet
(Nay, there is Cardinal Pole, too), the
people

Claim as their natural leader—ay, some
say,

That you shall marry him, make him King
belike.

Elizabeth. Do they say so, good
uncle ?

Howard. Ay, good niece !

You should be plain and open with me,
niece.

You should not play upon me.

Elizabeth. No, good uncle.

Enter GARDINER

Gardiner. The Queen would see your
Grace upon the moment.

Elizabeth. Why, my lord Bishop ?

Gardiner. I think she means to coun-
sel your withdrawing

To Ashridge, or some other country house.

Elizabeth. Why, my lord Bishop ?

Gardiner. I do but bring the message,
know no more.

Your Grace will hear her reasons from
herself.

Elizabeth. 'Tis mine own wish fulfill'd
before the word

Was spoken, for in truth I had meant to
crave

Permission of her Highness to retire
To Ashridge, and pursue mystudies there.

Gardiner. Madam, to have the wish
before the word
Is man's good Fairy—and the Queen is
yours.

I left her with rich jewels in her hand,
Whereof 'tis like enough she means to
make

A farewell present to your Grace.
Elizabeth. My Lord,

I have the jewel of a loyal heart.

Gardiner. I doubt it not, Madam,
most loyal. [*Bows low and exit.*]

Howard. See,
This comes of parleying with my Lord of
Devon.

Well, well, you must obey; and I myself
Believe it will be better for your welfare.
Your time will come.

Elizabeth. I think my time will come.
Uncle,

I am of sovereign nature, that I know,
Not to be quell'd; and I have felt within
me

Stirrings of some great doom when God's
just hour

Peals—but this fierce old Gardiner—his
big baldness,

That irritable forelock which he rubs,
His buzzard beak and deep-incavern'd
eyes

Half fright me.

Howard. You've a bold heart; keep
it so.

He cannot touch you save that you turn
traitor;

And so take heed I pray you—you are one
Who love that men should smile upon
you, niece.

They'd smile you into treason—some of
them.

Elizabeth. I spy the rock beneath the
smiling sea.

But if this Philip, the proud Catholic
prince,

And this bald priest, and she that hates
me, seek

In that lone house, to practise on my life,
By poison, fire, shot, stab—

Howard. They will not, niece.
Mine is the fleet and all the power at
sea—

Or will be in a moment. If they dared
To harm you, I would blow this Philip
and all

Your trouble to the dogstar and the devil.

Elizabeth. To the Pleiads, uncle; they
have lost a sister.

Howard. But why say that? what have
you done to lose her?

Come, come, I will go with you to the
Queen. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V

A ROOM IN THE PALACE

MARY with PHILIP'S miniature. ALICE

Mary (kissing the miniature). Most
goodly, Kinglike and an Emperor's
son,—

A king to be,—is he not noble, girl?

Alice. Goodly enough, your Grace,
and yet, methinks,

I have seen goodlier.

Mary. Ay; some waxen doll

Thy baby eyes have rested on, belike;
All red and white, the fashion of our land.

But my good mother came (God rest her
soul)

Of Spain, and I am Spanish in myself,
And in my likings.

Alice. By your Grace's leave
Your royal mother came of Spain, but
took

To the English red and white. Your
royal father

(For so they say) was all pure lily and rose
In his youth, and like a lady.

Mary. O, just God!
Sweet mother, you had time and cause
enough

To sicken of his lilies and his roses.

Cast off, betray'd, defamed, divorced,
forlorn!

And then the King—that traitor past
forgiveness,

The false archbishop fawning on him,
married

The mother of Elizabeth—a heretic
 Ev'n as *she* is ; but God hath sent me here
 To take such order with all heretics
 That it shall be, before I die, as tho'
 My father and my brother had not lived.
 What wast thou saying of this Lady Jane,
 Now in the Tower ?

Alice. Why, Madam, she was passing
 Some chapel down in Essex, and with her
 Lady Anne Wharton, and the Lady Anne
 Bow'd to the Pyx ; but Lady Jane stood
 up

Stiff as the very backbone of heresy.
 And wherefore bow ye not, says Lady
 Anne,

To him within there who made Heaven
 and Earth ?

I cannot, and I dare not, tell your Grace
 What Lady Jane replied.

Mary. But I will have it.

Alice. She said—pray pardon me, and
 pity her—

She hath harken'd evil counsel—ah ! she
 said,

The baker made him.

Mary. Monstrous ! blasphemous !
 She ought to burn. Hence, thou (*Exit*
Alice). No—being traitor

Her head will fall : shall it ? she is but a
 child.

We do not kill the child for doing that
 His father whipt him into doing—a head
 So full of grace and beauty ! would that
 mine

Were half as gracious ! O, my lord to be,
 My love, for thy sake only.

I am eleven years older than he is.

But will he care for that ?

No, by the holy Virgin, being noble,

But love me only : then the bastard sprout,
 My sister, is far fairer than myself.

Will he be drawn to her ?

No, being of the true faith with myself.

Paget is for him—for to wed with Spain

Would treble England—Gardiner is
 against him ;

The Council, people, Parliament against
 him ;

But I will have him ! My hard father
 hated me ;

My brother rather hated me than loved ;
 My sister cowers and hates me. Holy
 Virgin,
 Plead with thy blessed Son ; grant me my
 prayer :

Give me my Philip ; and we two will lead
 The living waters of the Faith again
 Back thro' their widow'd channel here,
 and watch

The parch'd banks rolling incense, as of
 old,

To heaven, and kindled with the palms
 of Christ !

Enter USHER

Who waits, sir ?

Usher. Madam, the Lord Chancellor.

Mary. Bid him come in. (*Enter*
 GARDINER.) Good morning, my
 good Lord. [*Exit Usher.*

Gardiner. That every morning of your
 Majesty

May be most good, is every morning's
 prayer

Of your most loyal subject, Stephen
 Gardiner.

Mary. Come you to tell me this, my
 Lord ?

Gardiner. And more.

Your people have begun to learn your
 worth.

Your pious wish to pay King Edward's
 debts,

Your lavish household curb'd, and the
 remission

Of half that subsidy levied on the
 people,

Make all tongues praise and all hearts
 beat for you.

I'd have you yet more loved : the realm
 is poor,

The exchequer at neap-tide : we might
 withdraw

Part of our garrison at Calais.

Mary. Calais !

Our one point on the main, the gate of
 France !

I am Queen of England ; take mine eyes,
 mine heart,

But do not lose me Calais.

Gardiner. Do not fear it.
Of that hereafter. I say your Grace is
loved.

That I may keep you thus, who am your
friend

And ever faithful counsellor, might I
speak?

Mary. I can forespeak your speaking.
Would I marry

Prince Philip, if all England hate him?
That is

Your question, and I front it with another :
Is it England, or a party? Now, your
answer.

Gardiner. My answer is, I wear be-
neath my dress

A shirt of mail: my house hath been
assaulted,

And when I walk abroad, the populace,
With fingers pointed like so many daggers,
Stab me in fancy, hissing Spain and
Philip;

And when I sleep, a hundred men-at-
arms

Guard my poor dreams for England.
Men would murder me,

Because they think me favourer of this
marriage.

Mary. And that were hard upon you,
my Lord Chancellor.

Gardiner. But our young Earl of
Devon—

Mary. Earl of Devon?
I freed him from the Tower, placed him
at Court;

I made him Earl of Devon, and—the
fool—

He wrecks his health and wealth on
courtesans,

And rolls himself in carrion like a dog.

Gardiner. More like a school-boy that
hath broken bounds,

Sickening himself with sweets.

Mary. I will not hear of him.
Good, then, they will revolt: but I am
Tudor,

And shall control them.

Gardiner. I will help you, Madam,
Even to the utmost. All the church is
grateful.

You have ousted the mock priest, re-
pulpited

The shepherd of St. Peter, raised the
rood again,

And brought us back the mass. I am all
thanks

To God and to your Grace: yet I know
well,

Your people, and I go with them so far,
Will brook nor Pope nor Spaniard here
to play

The tyrant, or in commonwealth or
church.

Mary (showing the picture). Is this the
face of one who plays the tyrant?

Peruse it; is it not goodly, ay, and gentle?

Gardiner. Madam, methinks a cold
face and a haughty.

And when your Highness talks of Cour-
tenay—

Ay, true—a goodly one. I would his
life

Were half as goodly (*aside*).

Mary. What is that you mutter?

Gardiner. Oh, Madam, take it bluntly;
marry Philip,

And be stepmother of a score of sons!
The prince is known in Spain, in Flanders,
ha!

For Philip—
Mary. You offend us; you may leave
us.

You see thro' warping glasses.
Gardiner. If your Majesty—

Mary. I have sworn upon the body
and blood of Christ—

I'll none but Philip.
Gardiner. Hath your Grace so sworn?

Mary. Ay, Simon Renard knows it.
Gardiner. News to me!

It then remains for your poor Gardiner,
So you still care to trust him somewhat
less

Than Simon Renard, to compose the
event

In some such form as least may harm
your Grace.

Mary. I'll have the scandal sounded
to the mud.

I know it a scandal.

Gardiner. All my hope is now
It may be found a scandal.

Mary. You offend us.

Gardiner (aside). These princes are
like children, must be physick'd,
The bitter in the sweet. I have lost
mine office,
It may be, thro' mine honesty, like a fool.
[*Exit.*]

Enter USHER

Mary. Who waits?

Usher. The Ambassador from France,
your Grace.

Mary (sits down). Bid him come in.
Good morning, Sir de Noailles.
[*Exit Usher.*]

Noailles (entering). A happy morning
to your Majesty.

Mary. And I should some time have
a happy morning ;
I have had none yet. What says the
King your master ?

Noailles. Madam, my master hears
with much alarm,
That you may marry Philip, Prince of
Spain—

Foreseeing, with whate'er unwillingness,
That if this Philip be the titular king
Of England, and at war with him, your
Grace

And kingdom will be suck'd into the war,
Ay, tho' you long for peace ; wherefore,
my master,

If but to prove your Majesty's goodwill,
Would fain have some fresh treaty drawn
between you.

Mary. Why some fresh treaty? where-
fore should I do it ?

Sir, if we marry, we shall still maintain
All former treaties with his Majesty.
Our royal word for that ! and your good
master,

Pray God he do not be the first to break
them,
Must be content with that ; and so, fare-
well.

Noailles (going, returns). I would your
answer had been other, Madam,
For I foresee dark days.

Mary. And so do I, sir ;
Your master works against me in the dark.
I do believe he help Northumberland
Against me.

Noailles. Nay, pure phantasy, your
Grace.

Why should he move against you ?

Mary. Will you hear why ?
Mary of Scotland,—for I have not own'd
My sister, and I will not,—after me
Is heir of England ; and my royal father,
To make the crown of Scotland one with
ours,
Had mark'd her for my brother Edward's
bride ;

Ay, but your king stole her a babe from
Scotland

In order to betroth her to your Dauphin.
See then :

Mary of Scotland, married to your
Dauphin,

Would make our England, France ;

Mary of England, joining hands with
Spain,

Would be too strong for France.

Yea, were there issue born to her, Spain
and we,

One crown, might rule the world. There
lies your fear.

That is your drift. You play at hide and
seek.

Show me your faces !

Noailles. Madam, I am amazed :
French, I must needs wish all good things
for France.

That must be pardon'd me ; but I protest
Your Grace's policy hath a farther flight
Than mine into the future. We but
seek

Some settled ground for peace to stand
upon.

Mary. Well, we will leave all this,
sir, to our council.

Have you seen Philip ever ?

Noailles. Only once.

Mary. Is this like Philip ?

Noailles. Ay, but nobler-looking.

Mary. Hath he the large ability of
the Emperor ?

Noailles. No, surely.

Mary. I can make allowance for thee,
Thou speakest of the enemy of thy king.

Noailles. Make no allowance for the
naked truth.

He is every way a lesser man than Charles;
Stone-hard, ice-cold—no dash of daring
in him.

Mary. If cold, his life is pure.

Noailles. Why (*smiling*), no, indeed.

Mary. Sayst thou?

Noailles. A very wanton life indeed
(*smiling*).

Mary. Your audience is concluded,
sir. [*Exit Noailles.*]

You cannot

Learn a man's nature from his natural foe.

Enter USHER

Who waits?

Usher. The Ambassador of Spain,
your Grace. [*Exit.*]

Enter SIMON RENARD

Mary (rising to meet him). Thou
art ever welcome, Simon Renard.
Hast thou

Brought me the letter which thine
Emperor promised

Long since, a formal offer of the hand
Of Philip?

Renard. Nay, your Grace, it hath not
reach'd me.

I know not wherefore—some mischance
of flood,

And broken bridge, or spavin'd horse, or
wave

And wind at their old battle: he must
have written.

Mary. But Philip never writes me
one poor word,

Which in his absence had been all my
wealth.

Strange in a wooer!

Renard. Yet I know the Prince,
So your king-parliament suffer him to
land,

Yearns to set foot upon your island shore.

Mary. God change the pebble which
his kingly foot

First presses into some more costly stone

Than ever blinded eye. I'll have one
mark it

And bring it me. I'll have it burnish'd
firelike;

I'll set it round with gold, with pearl,
with diamond.

Let the great angel of the church come
with him;

Stand on the deck and spread his wings
for sail!

God lay the waves and strow the storms
at sea,

And here at land among the people! O
Renard,

I am much beset, I am almost in despair.
Paget is ours. Gardiner perchance is

ours;

But for our heretic Parliament—

Renard. O Madam,

You fly your thoughts like kites. My
master, Charles,

Bad you go softly with your heretics here,
Until your throne had ceased to tremble.

Then

Spit them like larks for aught I care.
Besides,

When Henry broke the carcase of your
church

To pieces, there were many wolves among
you

Who dragg'd the scatter'd limbs into their
den.

The Pope would have you make them
render these;

So would your cousin, Cardinal Pole; ill
counsel!

These let them keep at present; stir not
yet

This matter of the Church lands. At
his coming

Your star will rise.

Mary. My star! a baleful one.

I see but the black night, and hear the
wolf.

What star?

Renard. Your star will be your princely
son,

Heir of this England and the Netherlands!

And if your wolf the while should howl
for more,

We'll dust him from a bag of Spanish gold.

I do believe, I have dusted some already,
That, soon or late, your Parliament is ours.

Mary. Why do they talk so foully of
your Prince,

Renard?

Renard. The lot of Princes. To sit
high

Is to be lied about.

Mary. They call him cold,
Haughty, ay, worse.

Renard. Why, doubtless, Philip shows
Some of the bearing of your blue blood—
still

All within measure—nay, it well becomes
him.

Mary. Hath he the large ability of
his father?

Renard. Nay, some believe that he
will go beyond him.

Mary. Is this like him?

Renard. Ay, somewhat; but your
Philip

Is the most princelike Prince beneath the
sun.

This is a daub to Philip.

Mary. Of a pure life?

Renard. As an angel among angels.

Yea, by Heaven,

The text—Your Highness knows it,
'Whosoever

Looketh after a woman,' would not graze
The Prince of Spain. You are happy in
him there,

Chaste as your Grace!

Mary. I am happy in him there.

Renard. And would be altogether
happy, Madam,

So that your sister were but look'd to
closer.

You have sent her from the court, but
then she goes,

I warrant, not to hear the nightingales,
But hatch you some new treason in the
woods.

Mary. We have our spies abroad to
catch her tripping,

And then if caught, to the Tower.

Renard. The Tower! the block!

The word has turn'd your Highness pale;
the thing

Was no such scarecrow in your father's
time.

I have heard, the tongue yet quiver'd
with the jest

When the head leapt—so common! I
do think

To save your crown that it must come to
this.

Mary. No, Renard; it must never
come to this.

Renard. Not yet; but your old
Traitors of the Tower—

Why, when you put Northumberland to
death,

The sentence having past upon them
all,

Spared you the Duke of Suffolk, Guild-
ford Dudley,

Ev'n that young girl who dared to wear
your crown?

Mary. Dared? nay, not so; the child
obey'd her father.

Spite of her tears her father forced it on
her.

Renard. Good Madam, when the
Roman wish'd to reign,

He slew not him alone who wore the
purple,

But his assessor in the throne, perchance
A child more innocent than Lady Jane.

Mary. I am English Queen, not
Roman Emperor.

Renard. Yet too much mercy is a
want of mercy,

And wastes more life. Stamp out the
fire, or this

Will smoulder and re-flame, and burn the
throne

Where you should sit with Philip: he
will not come

Till she be gone.

Mary. Indeed, if that were true—
For Philip comes, one hand in mine,
and one

Steadying the tremulous pillars of the
Church—

But no, no, no. Farewell. I am some-
what faint

With our long talk. Tho' Queen, I am
not Queen
Of mine own heart, which every now and
then
Beats me half dead : yet stay, this golden
chain—

My father on a birthday gave it me,
And I have broken with my father—take
And wear it as memorial of a morning
Which found me full of foolish doubts,
and leaves me
As hopeful.

Renard (aside). Whew—the folly of
all follies

Is to be love-sick for a shadow. (*Aloud*)
Madam,

This chains me to your service, not with
gold,

But dearest links of love. Farewell, and
trust me,

Philip is yours. [*Exit.*]

Mary. Mine—but not yet all mine.

Enter USHER.

Usher. Your Council is in Session,
please your Majesty.

Mary. Sir, let them sit. I must have
time to breathe.

No, say I come. (*Exit Usher.*) I won
by boldness once.

The Emperor counsell'd me to fly to
Flanders.

I would not ; but a hundred miles I rode,
Sent out my letters, call'd my friends
together,

Struck home and won.

And when the Council would not crown
me—thought

To bind me first by oaths I could not keep,
And keep with Christ and conscience—
was it boldness

Or weakness that won there? when I,
their Queen,

Cast myself down upon my knees before
them,

And those hard men brake into woman
tears,

Ev'n Gardiner, all amazed, and in that
passion

Gave me my Crown.

Enter ALICE

Girl ; hast thou ever heard
Slanders against Prince Philip in our
Court?

Alice. What slanders? I, your Grace ;
no, never.

Mary. Nothing?

Alice. Never, your Grace.

Mary. See that you neither hear them
nor repeat!

Alice (aside). Good Lord ! but I have
heard a thousand such.

Ay, and repeated them as often—mum !
Why comes that old fox-Fleming back
again?

Enter RENARD

Renard. Madam, I scarce had left
your Grace's presence
Before I chanced upon the messenger
Who brings that letter which we waited
for—

The formal offer of Prince Philip's hand.
It craves an instant answer, Ay or No.

Mary. An instant Ay or No ! the
Council sits.

Give it me quick.

Alice (stepping before her). Your High-
ness is all trembling.

Mary. Make way.

[*Exit into the Council Chamber.*]

Alice. O, Master Renard, Master
Renard,

If you have falsely painted your fine
Prince ;

Praised, where you should have blamed
him, I pray God

No woman ever love you, Master Renard.
It breaks my heart to hear her moan at
night

As tho' the nightmare never left her
bed.

Renard. My pretty maiden, tell me,
did you ever

Sigh for a beard?

Alice. That's not a pretty question.

Renard. Not prettily put? I mean,
my pretty maiden,
A pretty man for such a pretty maiden.

Alice. My Lord of Devon is a pretty man.

I hate him. Well, but if I have, what then?

Renard. Then, pretty maiden, you should know that whether
A wind be warm or cold, it serves to fan
A kindled fire.

Alice. According to the song.

His friends would praise him, I believed 'em,
His foes would blame him, and I scorn'd 'em,
His friends—as Angels I received 'em,
His foes—the Devil had suborn'd 'em.

Renard. Peace, pretty maiden.
I hear them stirring in the Council Chamber.
Lord Paget's 'Ay' is sure—who else?
and yet,
They are all too much at odds to close at once
In one full-throated No! Her Highness comes.

Enter MARY

Alice. How deathly pale!—a chair, your Highness.

[*Bringing one to the Queen.*

Renard. Madam,
The Council?

Mary. Ay! My Philip is all mine.
[*Sinks into chair, half fainting.*

ACT II

SCENE I.—ALINGTON CASTLE

Sir Thomas Wyatt. I do not hear from Carew or the Duke
Of Suffolk, and till then I should not move.
The Duke hath gone to Leicester; Carew stirs
In Devon: that fine porcelain Courtenay,
Save that he fears he might be crack'd in using,
(I have known a semi-madman in my time
So fancy-ridd'n) should be in Devon too.

Enter WILLIAM

News abroad, William?

William. None so new, Sir Thomas, and none so old, Sir Thomas. No new news that Philip comes to wed Mary, no old news that all men hate it. Old Sir Thomas would have hated it. The bells are ringing at Maidstone. Doesn't your worship hear?

Wyatt. Ay, for the Saints are come to reign again.
Most like it is a Saint's-day. There's no call

As yet for me; so in this pause, before
The mine be fired, it were a pious work
To string my father's sonnets, left about
Like loosely-scatter'd jewels, in fair order,
And head them with a lamer rhyme of mine,

To grace his memory.

William. Ay, why not, Sir Thomas? He was a fine courtier, he; Queen Anne loved him. All the women loved him. I loved him, I was in Spain with him. I couldn't eat in Spain, I couldn't sleep in Spain. I hate Spain, Sir Thomas.

Wyatt. But thou could'st drink in Spain if I remember.

William. Sir Thomas, we may grant the wine. Old Sir Thomas always granted the wine.

Wyatt. Hand me the casket with my father's sonnets.

William. Ay—sonnets—a fine courtier of the old Court, old Sir Thomas. [*Exit.*

Wyatt. Courtier of many courts, he loved the more

His own gray towers, plain life and letter'd peace,

To read and rhyme in solitary fields,
The lark above, the nightingale below,
And answer them in song. The sire begets

Not half his likeness in the son. I fail
Where he was fullest: yet—to write it down. [*He writes.*

Re-enter WILLIAM

William. There is news, there is news,

and no call for sonnet-sorting now, nor for sonnet-making either, but ten thousand men on Penenden Heath all calling after your worship, and your worship's name heard into Maidstone market, and your worship the first man in Kent and Christendom, for the Queen's down, and the world's up, and your worship a-top of it.

Wyatt. Inverted Æsop—mountain out of mouse.

Say for ten thousand ten—and pothouse knaves,

Brain-dizzied with a draught of morning ale.

Enter ANTONY KNYVETT

William. Here's Antony Knyvett.

Knyvett. Look you, Master Wyatt, Tear up that woman's work there.

Wyatt. No; not these, Dumb children of my father, that will speak

When I and thou and all rebellions lie Dead bodies without voice. Song flies you know

For ages.

Knyvett. Tut, your sonnet's a flying ant,

Wing'd for a moment.

Wyatt. Well, for mine own work,
[*Tearing the paper.*]

It lies there in six pieces at your feet; For all that I can carry it in my head.

Knyvett. If you can carry your head upon your shoulders.

Wyatt. I fear you come to carry it off my shoulders,

And sonnet-making's safer.

Knyvett. Why, good Lord, Write you as many sonnets as you will.

Ay, but not now; what, have you eyes, ears, brains?

This Philip and the black-faced swarms of Spain,

The hardest, cruellest people in the world, Come locusting upon us, eat us up,

Confiscate lands, goods, money—Wyatt,
Wyatt,

Wake, or the stout old island will become A rotten limb of Spain. They roar for you

On Penenden Heath, a thousand of them
—more—

All arm'd, waiting a leader; there's no glory

Like his who saves his country; and you sit

Sing-singing here; but, if I'm any judge, By God, you are as poor a poet, Wyatt,

As a good soldier.

Wyatt. You as poor a critic

As an honest friend: you stroke me on one cheek,

Buffet the other. — Come, you bluster, Antony!

You know I know all this. I must not move

Until I hear from Carew and the Duke.

I fear the mine is fired before the time.

Knyvett (showing a paper). But here's some Hebrew. Faith, I half forgot it.

Look; can you make it English? A strange youth

Suddenly thrust it on me, whisper'd, 'Wyatt,'

And whisking round a corner, show'd his back

Before I read his face.

Wyatt. Ha! Courtenay's cipher.

[*Reads.*]

'Sir Peter Carew fled to France: it is thought the Duke will be taken. I am with you still; but, for appearance sake, stay with the Queen. Gardiner knows, but the Council are all at odds, and the Queen hath no force for resistance. Move, if you move, at once.'

Is Peter Carew fled? Is the Duke taken? Down scabbard, and out sword! and let Rebellion

Roar till throne rock, and crown fall.

No; not that;

But we will teach Queen Mary how to reign.

Who are those that shout below there?

Knyvett. Why, some fifty

That follow'd me from Penenden Heath in hope

To hear you speak.

Wyatt. Open the window, Knyvett ;
The mine is fired, and I will speak to
them.

Men of Kent ; England of England ;
you that have kept your old customs
upright, while all the rest of England
bow'd theirs to the Norman, the cause
that hath brought us together is not the
cause of a county or a shire, but of this
England, in whose crown our Kent is the
fairest jewel. Philip shall not wed Mary ;
and ye have called me to be your leader.
I know Spain. I have been there with
my father ; I have seen them in their own
land ; have marked the haughtiness of
their nobles ; the cruelty of their priests.
If this man marry our Queen, however
the Council and the Commons may fence
round his power with restriction, he will
be King, King of England, my masters ;
and the Queen, and the laws, and the
people, his slaves. What ? shall we have
Spain on the throne and in the parlia-
ment ; Spain in the pulpit and on the
law-bench ; Spain in all the great offices
of state ; Spain in our ships, in our forts,
in our houses, in our beds ?

Crowd. No ! no ! no Spain !

William. No Spain in our beds—that
were worse than all. I have been there
with old Sir Thomas, and the beds I
know. I hate Spain.

A Peasant. But, Sir Thomas, must
we levy war against the Queen's Grace ?

Wyatt. No, my friend ; war for the
Queen's Grace—to save her from herself
and Philip—war against Spain. And
think not we shall be alone—thousands
will flock to us. The Council, the Court
itself, is on our side. The Lord Chancel-
lor himself is on our side. The King of
France is with us ; the King of Denmark
is with us ; the world is with us—war
against Spain ! And if we move not now,
yet it will be known that we have moved ;
and if Philip come to be King, O, my
God ! the rope, the rack, the thumbscrew,
the stake, the fire. If we move not now,
Spain moves, bribes our nobles with her

gold, and creeps, creeps snake-like about
our legs till we cannot move at all ; and
ye know, my masters, that wherever
Spain hath ruled she hath wither'd all
beneath her. Look at the New World—
a paradise made hell ; the red man, that
good helpless creature, starved, maim'd,
flogg'd, flay'd, burn'd, boil'd, buried
alive, worried by dogs ; and here, nearer
home, the Netherlands, Sicily, Naples,
Lombardy. I say no more—only this,
their lot is yours. Forward to London
with me ! forward to London ! If ye
love your liberties or your skins, forward
to London !

Crowd. Forward to London ! A

Wyatt ! a Wyatt !

Wyatt. But first to Rochester, to take
the guns

From out the vessels lying in the river.

Then on.

A Peasant. Ay, but I fear we be too
few, Sir Thomas.

Wyatt. Not many yet. The world as
yet, my friend,

Is not half-waked ; but every parish
tower

Shall clang and clash alarum as we
pass,

And pour along the land, and swoll'n and
fed

With indraughts and side-currents, in full
force

Roll upon London.

Crowd. A Wyatt ! a Wyatt ! Forward !

Knyvett. Wyatt, shall we proclaim
Elizabeth ?

Wyatt. I'll think upon it, Knyvett.

Knyvett. Or Lady Jane ?

Wyatt. No, poor soul ; no.

Ah, gray old castle of Alington, green field
Beside the brimming Medway, it may
chance

That I shall never look upon you more.

Knyvett. Come, now, you're sonnet-
ing again.

Wyatt.

Not I.

I'll have my head set higher in the state ;
Or—if the Lord God will it—on the stake.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—GUILDHALL

SIR THOMAS WHITE (The Lord Mayor),
LORD WILLIAM HOWARD, SIR
RALPH BAGENHALL, ALDERMEN and
CITIZENS.

White. I trust the Queen comes hither
with her guards.

Howard. Ay, all in arms.

*[Several of the citizens move hastily out
of the hall.]*

Why do they hurry out there?

White. My Lord, cut out the rotten
from your apple,

Your apple eats the better. Let them go.
They go like those old Pharisees in John
Convicted by their conscience, arrant
cowards,

Or tamperers with that treason out of
Kent.

When will her Grace be here?

Howard. In some few minutes.
She will address your guilds and com-
panies.

I have striven in vain to raise a man for her.
But help her in this exigency, make
Your city loyal, and be the mightiest man
This day in England.

White. I am Thomas White.
Few things have fail'd to which I set my
will.

I do my most and best.

Howard. You know that after
The Captain Brett, who went with your
train bands

To fight with Wyatt, had gone over to him
With all his men, the Queen in that
distress

Sent Cornwallis and Hastings to the
traitor,

Feigning to treat with him about her
marriage—

Know too what Wyatt said.

White. He'd sooner be,
While this same marriage question was
being argued,

Trusted than trust—the scoundrel—and
demanded

Possession of her person and the Tower.

Howard. And four of her poor Coun-
cil too, my Lord,

As hostages.

White. I know it. What do and say
Your Council at this hour?

Howard. I will trust you.
We fling ourselves on you, my Lord.

The Council,
The Parliament as well, are troubled
waters;

And yet like waters of the fen they know
not

Which way to flow. All hangs on her
address,

And upon you, Lord Mayor.

White. How look'd the city
When now you past it? Quiet?

Howard. Like our Council,
Your city is divided. As we past,
Some hail'd, some hiss'd us. There were
citizens

Stood each before his shut-up booth, and
look'd

As grim and grave as from a funeral.

And here a knot of ruffians all in rags,

With execrating execrable eyes,

Glared at the citizen. Here was a young
mother,

Her face on flame, her red hair all blown
back,

She shrilling 'Wyatt,' while the boy she
held

Mimick'd and piped her 'Wyatt,' as red
as she

In hair and cheek; and almost elbowing
her,

So close they stood, another, mute as
death,

And white as her own milk; her babe in
arms

Had felt the faltering of his mother's
heart,

And look'd as bloodless. Here a pious
Catholic,

Mumbling and mixing up in his scared
prayers

Heaven and earth's Maries; over his
bow'd shoulder

Scowl'd that world-hated and world-
hating beast,

A haggard Anabaptist. Many such groups.

The names of Wyatt, Elizabeth, Courtenay,

Nay the Queen's right to reign—'fore God, the rogues—

Were freely buzzed among them. So I say Your city is divided, and I fear

One scruple, this or that way, of success Would turn it thither. Wherefore now the Queen

In this low pulse and palsy of the state, Bad me to tell you that she counts on you And on myself as her two hands ; on you, In your own city, as her right, my Lord, For you are loyal.

White. Am I Thomas White ? One word before she comes. Elizabeth— Her name is much abused among these traitors.

Where is she ? She is loved by all of us. I scarce have heart to mingle in this matter,

If she should be mishandled.

Howard. No ; she shall not. The Queen had written her word to come to court :

Methought I smelt out Renard in the letter,

And fearing for her, sent a secret missive, Which told her to be sick. Happily or not,

It found her sick indeed.

White. God send her well ; Here comes her Royal Grace.

Enter Guards, MARY, and GARDINER.
SIR THOMAS WHITE *leads her to a raised seat on the dais.*

White. I, the Lord Mayor, and these our companies

And guilds of London, gathered here, beseech

Your Highness to accept our lowliest thanks

For your most princely presence ; and we pray

That we, your true and loyal citizens, From your own royal lips, at once may know

The wherefore of this coming, and so learn Your royal will, and do it.—I, Lord Mayor

Of London, and our guilds and companies.

Mary. In mine own person am I come to you,

To tell you what indeed ye see and know, How traitorously these rebels out of Kent Have made strong head against ourselves and you.

They would not have me wed the Prince of Spain ;

That was their pretext—so they spake at first—

But we sent divers of our Council to them, And by their answers to the question ask'd, It doth appear this marriage is the least Of all their quarrel.

They have betrayed the treason of their hearts :

Seek to possess our person, hold our Tower,

Place and displace our councillors, and use Both us and them according as they will.

Now what I am ye know right well—your Queen ;

To whom, when I was wedded to the realm And the realm's laws (the spousal ring whereof,

Not ever to be laid aside, I wear Upon this finger), ye did promise full Allegiance and obedience to the death.

Ye know my father was the rightful heir Of England, and his right came down to me,

Corroborate by your acts of Parliament : And as ye were most loving unto him, So doubtless will ye show yourselves to me.

Wherefore, ye will not brook that anyone Should seize our person, occupy our state, More specially a traitor so presumptuous As this same Wyatt, who hath tamper'd with

A public ignorance, and, under colour Of such a cause as hath no colour, seeks To bend the laws to his own will, and yield Full scope to persons rascal and forlorn, To make free spoil and havock of your goods.

Now as your Prince, I say,
 I, that was never mother, cannot tell
 How mothers love their children ; yet,
 methinks,
 A prince as naturally may love his people
 As these their children ; and be sure your
 Queen
 So loves you, and so loving, needs must
 deem
 This love by you return'd as heartily ;
 And thro' this common knot and bond of
 love,
 Doubt not they will be speedily over-
 thrown.
 As to this marriage, ye shall understand
 We made thereto no treaty of ourselves,
 And set no foot theretoward unadvised
 Of all our Privy Council ; furthermore,
 This marriage had the assent of those to
 whom
 The king, my father, did commit his trust ;
 Who not alone esteem'd it honourable,
 But for the wealth and glory of our realm,
 And all our loving subjects, most ex-
 pedient.
 As to myself,
 I am not so set on wedlock as to choose
 But where I list, nor yet so amorous
 That I must needs be husbanded ; I thank
 God,
 I have lived a virgin, and I noway doubt
 But that with God's grace, I can live so
 still.
 Yet if it might please God that I should
 leave
 Some fruit of mine own body after me,
 To be your king, ye would rejoice thereat,
 And it would be your comfort, as I trust ;
 And truly, if I either thought or knew
 This marriage should bring loss or danger
 to you,
 My subjects, or impair in any way
 This royal state of England, I would never
 Consent thereto, nor marry while I live ;
 Moreover, if this marriage should not
 seem,
 Before our own High Court of Parliament,
 To be of rich advantage to our realm,
 We will refrain, and not alone from this,
 Likewise from any other, out of which

Looms the least chance of peril to our
 realm.
 Wherefore be bold, and with your lawful
 Prince
 Stand fast against our enemies and yours,
 And fear them not. I fear them not.
 My Lord,
 I leave Lord William Howard in your city,
 To guard and keep you whole and safe
 from all
 The spoil and sackage aim'd at by these
 rebels,
 Who mouth and foam against the Prince
 of Spain.
Voices. Long live Queen Mary !
 Down with Wyatt !
 The Queen !
White. Three voices from our guilds
 and companies !
 You are shy and proud like Englishmen,
 my masters,
 And will not trust your voices. Under-
 stand :
 Your lawful Prince hath come to cast
 herself
 On loyal hearts and bosoms, hoped to fall
 Into the wide-spread arms of fealty,
 And finds you statues. Speak at once—
 and all !
 For whom ?
 Our sovereign Lady by King Harry's will ;
 The Queen of England—or the Kentish
 Squire ?
 I know you loyal. Speak ! in the name
 of God !
 The Queen of England or the rabble of
 Kent ?
 The reeking dungfork master of the mace !
 Your havings wasted by the scythe and
 spade—
 Your rights and charters hobnail'd into
 slush—
 Your houses fired—your gutters bubbling
 blood—
Acclamation. No ! No ! The Queen !
 the Queen !
White. Your Highness hears
 This burst and bass of loyal harmony,
 And how we each and all of us abhor
 The venomous, bestial, devilish revolt

Of Thomas Wyatt. Hear us now make
oath
To raise your Highness thirty thousand
men,
And arm and strike as with one hand,
and brush

This Wyatt from our shoulders, like a flea
That might have leapt upon us unawares.
Swear with me, noble fellow-citizens, all,
With all your trades, and guilds, and
companies.

Citizens. We swear!

Mary. We thank your Lordship and
your loyal city.

[*Exit Mary attended.*]

White. I trust this day, thro' God, I
have saved the crown.

First Alderman. Ay, so my Lord of
Pembroke in command
Of all her force be safe; but there are
doubts.

Second Alderman. I hear that Gar-
diner, coming with the Queen,
And meeting Pembroke, bent to his
saddle-bow,

As if to win the man by flattering him.
Is he so safe to fight upon her side?

First Alderman. If not, there's no
man safe.

White. Yes, Thomas White.
I am safe enough; no man need flatter
me.

Second Alderman. Nay, no man need;
but did you mark our Queen?
The colour freely play'd into her face,
And the half sight which makes her look
so stern,
Seem'd thro' that dim dilated world of
hers,

To read our faces; I have never seen her
So queenly or so goodly.

White. Courage, sir,
That makes or man or woman look their
goodliest.

Die like the torn fox dumb, but never
whine
Like that poor heart, Northumberland,
at the block.

Bagenhall. The man had children,
and he whined for those.

Methinks most men are but poor-hearted,
else

Should we so doat on courage, were it
commoner?

The Queen stands up, and speaks for her
own self;

And all men cry, She is queenly, she is
goodly.

Yet she's no goodlier; tho' my Lord
Mayor here,

By his own rule, he hath been so bold
to-day,

Should look more goodly than the rest of
us.

White. Goodly? I feel most goodly
heart and hand,

And strong to throw ten Wyatts and all
Kent.

Ha! ha! sir; but you jest; I love it: a
jest

In time of danger shows the pulses even.
Be merry! yet, Sir Ralph, you look but
sad.

I dare avouch you'd stand up for yourself,
Tho' all the world should bay like winter
wolves.

Bagenhall. Who knows? the man is
proven by the hour.

White. The man should make the
hour, not this the man;
And Thomas White will prove this
Thomas Wyatt,

And he will prove an Iden to this Cade,
And he will play the Walworth to this
Wat;

Come, sirs, we prate; hence all—gather
your men—

Myself must bustle. Wyatt comes to
Southwark;

I'll have the drawbridge hewn into the
Thames,

And see the citizens arm'd. Good day;
good day. [*Exit White.*]

Bagenhall. One of much outdoor
bluster.

Howard. For all that,
Most honest, brave, and skilful; and his
wealth

A fountain of perennial alms—his fault
So thoroughly to believe in his own self.

Bagenhall. Yet thoroughly to believe
in one's own self,
So one's own self be thorough, were to do
Great things, my Lord.

Howard. It may be.

Bagenhall. I have heard
One of your Council fleer and jeer at him.

Howard. The nursery-cocker'd child
will jeer at aught
That may seem strange beyond his nursery.
The statesman that shall jeer and fleer at
men,

Makes enemies for himself and for his king;
And if he jeer not seeing the true man
Behind his folly, he is thrice the fool;
And if he see the man and still will jeer,
He is child and fool, and traitor to the
State.

Who is he? let me shun him.

Bagenhall. Nay, my Lord,
He is damn'd enough already.

Howard. I must set
The guard at Ludgate. Fare you well,
Sir Ralph.

Bagenhall. 'Who knows?' I am for
England. But who knows,
That knows the Queen, the Spaniard, and
the Pope,
Whether I be for Wyatt, or the Queen?
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—LONDON BRIDGE

Enter SIR THOMAS WYATT and BRETT

Wyatt. Brett, when the Duke of
Norfolk moved against us
Thou criest 'A Wyatt!' and flying to
our side

Left his all bare, for which I love thee,
Brett.

Have for thine asking aught that I can give,
For thro' thine help we are come to
London Bridge;

But how to cross it balks me. I fear we
cannot.

Brett. Nay, hardly, save by boat,
swimming, or wings.

Wyatt. Last night I climb'd into the
gate-house, Brett,

And scared the gray old porter and his wife.
And then I crept along the gloom and saw
They had hewn the drawbridge down into
the river.

It roll'd as black as death; and that same
tide

Which, coming with our coming, seem'd
to smile

And sparkle like our fortune as thou
saigest,

Ran sunless down, and moan'd against
the piers.

But o'er the chasm I saw Lord William
Howard

By torchlight, and his guard; four guns
gaped at me,

Black, silent mouths: had Howard spied
me there

And made them speak, as well he might
have done,

Their voice had left me none to tell you
this.

What shall we do?

Brett. On somehow. To go back
Were to lose all.

Wyatt. On over London Bridge
We cannot: stay we cannot; there is
ordnance

On the White Tower and on the Devil's
Tower,

And pointed full at Southwark; we must
round

By Kingston Bridge.

Brett. Ten miles about.

Wyatt. Ev'n so.

But I have notice from our partisans
Within the city that they will stand by us
If Ludgate can be reach'd by dawn to-
morrow.

Enter one of WYATT'S men

Man. Sir Thomas, I've found this
paper; pray your worship read it; I
know not my letters; the old priests
taught me nothing.

Wyatt (reads). 'Whosoever will ap-
prehend the traitor Thomas Wyatt shall
have a hundred pounds for reward.'

Man. Is that it? That's a big lot of
money.

Wyatt. Ay, ay, my friend; not read it? 'tis not written
Half plain enough. Give me a piece of paper!

[*Writes 'THOMAS WYATT' large.*]

There, any man can read that. *

[*Sticks it in his cap.*]

Brett. But that's foolhardy.

Wyatt. No! boldness, which will give my followers boldness.

Enter MAN with a prisoner

Man. We found him, your worship, a plundering o' Bishop Winchester's house; he says he's a poor gentleman.

Wyatt. Gentleman! a thief! Go hang him. Shall we make Those that we come to serve our sharpest foes?

Brett. Sir Thomas—

Wyatt. Hang him, I say.

Brett. Wyatt, but now you promised me a boon.

Wyatt. Ay, and I warrant this fine fellow's life.

Brett. Ev'n so; he was my neighbour once in Kent.

He's poor enough, has drunk and gambled out

All that he had, and gentleman he was. We have been glad together; let him live.

Wyatt. He has gambled for his life, and lost, he hangs.

No, no, my word's my word. Take thy poor gentleman!

Gamble thyself at once out of my sight, Or I will dig thee with my dagger. Away! Women and children!

Enter a Crowd of WOMEN and Children

First Woman. O Sir Thomas, Sir Thomas, pray you go away, Sir Thomas, or you'll make the White Tower a black 'un for us this blessed day. He'll be the death on us; and you'll set the Devil's Tower a-spitting, and he'll smash all our bits o' things worse than Philip o' Spain.

Second Woman. Don't ye now go to think that we be for Philip o' Spain.

Third Woman. No, we know that ye

be come to kill the Queen, and we'll pray for you all on our bended knees. But o' God's mercy don't ye kill the Queen here, Sir Thomas; look ye, here's little Dickon, and little Robin, and little Jenny—though she's but a side-cousin—and all on our knees, we pray you to kill the Queen further off, Sir Thomas.

Wyatt. My friends, I have not come to kill the Queen

Or here or there: I come to save you all, And I'll go further off.

Crowd. Thanks, Sir Thomas, we be beholden to you, and we'll pray for you on our bended knees till our lives' end.

Wyatt. Be happy, I am your friend. To Kingston, forward! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.—ROOM IN THE GATEHOUSE OF WESTMINSTER PALACE

MARY, ALICE, GARDINER, RENARD, LADIES

Gardiner. Their cry is, Philip never shall be king.

Mary. Lord Pembroke in command of all our force Will front their cry and shatter them into dust.

Alice. Was not Lord Pembroke with Northumberland?
O madam, if this Pembroke should be false?

Mary. No, girl; most brave and loyal, brave and loyal.
His breaking with Northumberland broke Northumberland.

At the park gate he hovers with our guards.
These Kentish ploughmen cannot break the guards.

Enter MESSENGER

Messenger. Wyatt, your Grace, hath broken thro' the guards
And gone to Ludgate.

Gardiner. Madam, I much fear That all is lost; but we can save your Grace.

The river still is free. I do beseech you,

There yet is time, take boat and pass to Windsor.

Mary. I pass to Windsor and I lose my crown.

Gardiner. Pass, then, I pray your Highness, to the Tower.

Mary. I shall but be their prisoner in the Tower.

Cries without. The traitor ! treason ! Pembroke !

Ladies. Treason ! treason !

Mary. Peace.

False to Northumberland, is he false to me ?

Bear witness, Renard, that I live and die

The true and faithful bride of Philip—A sound

Of feet and voices thickening hither—blows—

Hark, there is battle at the palace gates,

And I will out upon the gallery.

Ladies. No, no, your Grace ; see there the arrows flying.

Mary. I am Harry's daughter, Tudor, and not Fear.

[*Goes out on the gallery.*]

The guards are all driven in, skulk into corners

Like rabbits to their holes. A gracious guard

Truly ; shame on them ! they have shut the gates !

Enter SIR ROBERT SOUTHWELL

Southwell. The porter, please your Grace, hath shut the gates

On friend and foe. Your gentlemen-at-arms,

If this be not your Grace's order, cry To have the gates set wide again, and they With their good battleaxes will do you right

Against all traitors.

Mary. They are the flower of England ; set the gates wide.

[*Exit* Southwell.]

Enter COURTENAY

Courtenay. All lost, all lost, all yielded ! A barge ! a barge !

The Queen must to the Tower.

Mary. Whence come you, sir ?

Courtenay. From Charing Cross ; the rebels broke us there,

And I sped hither with what haste I might To save my royal cousin.

Mary. Where is Pembroke ?

Courtenay. I left him somewhere in the thick of it.

Mary. Left him and fled ; and thou that would'st be King,

And hast nor heart nor honour. I myself Will down into the battle and there bide The upshot of my quarrel, or die with those That are no cowards and no Courtenays.

Courtenay. I do not love your Grace should call me coward.

Enter another MESSENGER

Messenger. Over, your Grace, all crush'd ; the brave Lord William Thrust him from Ludgate, and the traitor flying

To Temple Bar, there by Sir Maurice Berkeley

Was taken prisoner.

Mary. To the Tower with him !

Messenger. 'Tis said he told Sir Maurice there was one

Cognisant of this, and party thereunto, My Lord of Devon.

Mary. To the Tower with him !

Courtenay. O la, the Tower, the Tower, always the Tower,

I shall grow into it—I shall be the Tower.

Mary. Your Lordship may not have so long to wait.

Remove him !

Courtenay. La, to whistle out my life, And carve my coat upon the walls again !

[*Exit* Courtenay guarded.]

Messenger. Also this Wyatt did confess the Princess

Cognisant thereof, and party thereunto.

Mary. What? whom—whom did you say ?

Messenger. Elizabeth,
Your Royal sister.

Mary. To the Tower with her!
My foes are at my feet and I am Queen.

[*Gardiner and her Ladies kneel to her.*

Gardiner (rising). There let them lie,
your footstool! (*Aside.*) Can I
strike

Elizabeth?—not now and save the life
Of Devon: if I save him, he and his
Are bound to me—may strike hereafter.

(*Aloud.*) Madam,
What Wyatt said, or what they said he said,
Cries of the moment and the street—

Mary. He said it.

Gardiner. Your courts of justice will
determine that.

Renard (advancing). I trust by this
your Highness will allow
Some spice of wisdom in my telling you,
When last we talk'd, that Philip would
not come

Till Guildford Dudley and the Duke of
Suffolk,

And Lady Jane had left us.

Mary. They shall die.

Renard. And your so loving sister?

Mary. She shall die.

My foes are at my feet, and Philip King.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III

SCENE I.—THE CONDUIT IN GRACE- CHURCH,

*Painted with the Nine Worthies, among
them King Henry VIII. holding a book,
on it inscribed 'Verbum Dei.'*

*Enter SIR RALPH BAGENHALL and SIR
THOMAS STAFFORD*

Bagenhall. A hundred here and
hundreds hang'd in Kent.
The tigress had unsheath'd her nails at
last,

And Renard and the Chancellor sharpen'd
them.

In every London street a gibbet stood.
They are down to-day. Here by this
house was one;

The traitor husband dangled at the door,
And when the traitor wife came out for
bread

To still the petty treason therewithin,
Her cap would brush his heels.

Stafford. It is Sir Ralph,
And muttering to himself as heretofore.
Sir, see you aught up yonder?

Bagenhall. I miss something.
The tree that only bears dead fruit is gone.

Stafford. What tree, sir?

Bagenhall. Well, the tree in
Virgil, sir,

That bears not its own apples.

Stafford. What! the gallows?

Bagenhall. Sir, this dead fruit was
ripening overmuch,

And had to be removed lest living Spain
Should sicken at dead England.

Stafford. Not so dead,
But that a shock may rouse her.

Bagenhall. I believe
Sir Thomas Stafford?

Stafford. I am ill disguised.

Bagenhall. Well, are you not in peril
here?

Stafford. I think so.
I came to feel the pulse of England,
whether

It beats hard at this marriage. Did you
see it?

Bagenhall. Stafford, I am a sad man
and a serious.

Far liefer had I in my country hall
Been reading some old book, with mine
old hound

Couch'd at my hearth, and mine old flask
of wine

Beside me, than have seen it: yet I saw it.

Stafford. Good, was it splendid?

Bagenhall. Ay, if Dukes, and Earls,
And Counts, and sixty Spanish cavaliers,
Some six or seven Bishops, diamonds,
pearls,

That royal commonplace too, cloth of gold,
Could make it so.

Stafford. And what was Mary's dress?

Bagenhall. Good faith, I was too sorry
for the woman.

To mark the dress. She wore red shoes!

Stafford. Red shoes !

Bagenhall. Scarlet, as if her feet were
wash'd in blood,
As if she had waded in it.

Stafford. Were your eyes
So bashful that you look'd no higher ?

Bagenhall. A diamond,
And Philip's gift, as proof of Philip's love,
Who hath not any for any,—tho' a true
one,
Blazed false upon her heart.

Stafford. But this proud Prince—

Bagenhall. Nay, he is King, you
know, the King of Naples.
The father ceded Naples, that the son
Being a King, might wed a Queen—O he
Flamed in brocade—white satin his trunk-
hose,

Inwrought with silver,—on his neck a
collar,
Gold, thick with diamonds ; hanging
down from this

The Golden Fleece—and round his knee,
misplaced,

Our English Garter, studded with great
emeralds,

Rubies, I know not what. Have you had
enough

Of all this gear ?

Stafford. Ay, since you hate the tell-
ing it.

How look'd the Queen ?

Bagenhall. No fairer for her jewels.
And I could see that as the new-made
couple

Came from the Minster, moving side by
side

Beneath one canopy, ever and anon
She cast on him a vassal smile of love,
Which Philip with a glance of some dis-
taste,

Or so methought, return'd. I may be
wrong, sir.

This marriage will not hold.

Stafford. I think with you.

The King of France will help to break it.

Bagenhall. France !

We once had half of France, and hurl'd
our battles

Into the heart of Spain ; but England now

Is but a ball chuck'd between France and
Spain,

His in whose hand she drops ; Harry of
Bolingbroke

Had holpen Richard's tottering throne to
stand,

Could Harry have foreseen that all our
nobles

Would perish on the civil slaughter-field,
And leave the people naked to the crown,

And the crown naked to the people ; the
crown

Female, too ! Sir, no woman's regimen
Can save us. We are fallen, and as I

think,

Never to rise again.

Stafford. You are too black-blooded.
I'd make a move myself to hinder that :

I know some lusty fellows there in
France.

Bagenhall. You would but make us
weaker, Thomas Stafford.

Wyatt was a good soldier, yet he fail'd,
And strengthen'd Philip.

Stafford. Did not his last breath
Clear Courtenay and the Princess from

the charge
Of being his co-rebels ?

Bagenhall. Ay, but then
What such a one as Wyatt says is nothing :

We have no men among us. The new
Lords

Are quieted with their sop of Abbeylands,
And ev'n before the Queen's face Gardiner

buys them

With Philip's gold. All greed, no faith,
no courage !

Why, ev'n the haughty prince, Northum-
berland,

The leader of our Reformation, knelt
And blubber'd like a lad, and on the
scaffold

Recanted, and resold himself to Rome.

Stafford. I swear you do your country
wrong, Sir Ralph.

I know a set of exiles over there,

Dare-devils, that would eat fire and spit
it out

At Philip's beard : they pillage Spain
already.

The French King winks at it. An hour
will come

When they will sweep her from the seas.
No men?

Did not Lord Suffolk die like a true man?
Is not Lord William Howard a true man?
Yea, you yourself, altho' you are black-
blooded:

And I, by God, believe myself a man.
Ay, even in the church there is a man—
Cranmer.

Fly would he not, when all men bad him
fly.

And what a letter he wrote against the
Pope!

There's a brave man, if any.

Bagenhall. Ay; if it hold.

Crowd (coming on). God save their
Graces!

Stafford. Bagenhall, I see
The Tudor green and white. (*Trumpets.*)
They are coming now.

And here's a crowd as thick as herring-
shoals.

Bagenhall. Be limpets to this pillar,
or we are torn

Down the strong wave of brawlers.

Crowd. God save their Graces!

[*Procession of Trumpeters, Javelin-
men, etc.; then Spanish and
Flemish Nobles intermingled.*]

Stafford. Worth seeing, Bagenhall!
These black dog-Dons

Garb themselves bravely. Who's the
long-face there,

Looks very Spain of very Spain?

Bagenhall. The Duke
Of Alva, an iron soldier.

Stafford. And the Dutchman,
Now laughing at some jest?

Bagenhall. William of Orange,
William the Silent.

Stafford. Why do they call him so?

Bagenhall. He keeps, they say, some
secret that may cost
Philip his life.

Stafford. But then he looks so merry.

Bagenhall. I cannot tell you why they
call him so.

[*The King and Queen pass, attended*

*by Peers of the Realm, Officers of
State, etc. Cannon shot off.*

Crowd. Philip and Mary, Philip and
Mary!

Long live the King and Queen, Philip
and Mary!

Stafford. They smile as if content with
one another.

Bagenhall. A smile abroad is oft a
scowl at home.

[*King and Queen pass on. Procession.*

First Citizen. I thought this Philip
had been one of those black devils of
Spain, but he hath a yellow beard.

Second Citizen. Not red like Iscariot's.

First Citizen. Like a carrot's, as thou
say'st, and English carrot's better than
Spanish licorice; but I thought he was a
beast.

Third Citizen. Certain I had heard
that every Spaniard carries a tail like a
devil under his trunk-hose.

Tailor. Ay, but see what trunk-hoses!
Lord! they be fine; I never stitch'd none
such. They make amends for the tails.

Fourth Citizen. Tut! every Spanish
priest will tell you that all English heretics
have tails.

Fifth Citizen. Death and the Devil—
if he find I have one—

Fourth Citizen. Lo! thou hast call'd
them up! here they come—a pale horse
for Death and Gardiner for the Devil.

*Enter GARDINER (turning back from the
procession)*

Gardiner. Knave, wilt thou wear thy
cap before the Queen?

Man. My Lord, I stand so squeezed
among the crowd

I cannot lift my hands unto my head.

Gardiner. Knock off his cap there,
some of you about him!

See there be others that can use their hands.
Thou art one of Wyatt's men?

Man. No, my Lord, no.

Gardiner. Thy name, thou knave?

Man. I am nobody, my Lord.

Gardiner (shouting). God's passion!
knave, thy name?

Man. I have ears to hear.

Gardiner. Ay, rascal, if I leave thee ears to hear.

Find out his name and bring it me (*to Attendant*).

Attendant. Ay, my Lord.

Gardiner. Knave, thou shalt lose thine ears and find thy tongue,

And shalt be thankful if I leave thee that.

[*Coming before the Conduit.*]

The conduit painted—the nine worthies—ay!

But then what's here? King Harry with a scroll.

Ha—*Verbum Dei*—*verbum*—word of God!

God's passion! do you know the knave that painted it?

Attendant. I do, my Lord.

Gardiner. Tell him to paint it out, And put some fresh device in lieu of it—

A pair of gloves, a pair of gloves, sir; ha?

There is no heresy there.

Attendant. I will, my Lord;

The man shall paint a pair of gloves. I am sure

(Knowing the man) he wrought it ignorantly,

And not from any malice.

Gardiner. Word of God

In English! over this the brainless loons

That cannot spell *Esaias* from St. Paul, Make themselves drunk and mad, fly out

and flare

Into rebellions. I'll have their bibles burnt.

The bible is the priest's. Ay! fellow, what!

Stand staring at me! shout, you gaping rogue!

Man. I have, my Lord, shouted till I am hoarse.

Gardiner. What hast thou shouted, knave?

Man. Long live Queen Mary!

Gardiner. Knave, there be two.

There be both King and Queen,

Philip and Mary. Shout!

Man. Nay, but, my Lord, The Queen comes first, Mary and Philip.

Gardiner. Shout, then,

Mary and Philip!

Man. Mary and Philip!

Gardiner. Now,

Thou hast shouted for thy pleasure, shout for mine!

Philip and Mary!

Man. Must it be so, my Lord?

Gardiner. Ay, knave.

Man. Philip and Mary!

Gardiner. I distrust thee.

Thine is a half voice and a lean assent.

What is thy name?

Man. Sanders.

Gardiner. What else?

Man. Zerubbabel.

Gardiner. Where dost thou live?

Man. In Cornhill.

Gardiner. Where, knave, where?

Man. Sign of the Talbot.

Gardiner. Come to me to-morrow.—

Rascal!—this land is like a hill of fire,

One crater opens when another shuts.

But so I get the laws against the heretic,

Spite of Lord Paget and Lord William

Howard,

And others of our Parliament, revived,

I will show fire on my side—stake and fire—

Sharp work and short. The knaves are easily cow'd.

Follow their Majesties.

[*Exit. The crowd following.*]

Bagenhall. As proud as Becket.

Stafford. You would not have him murder'd as Becket was?

Bagenhall. No—murder fathers murder: but I say

There is no man—there was one woman with us—

It was a sin to love her married, dead

I cannot choose but love her.

Stafford. Lady Jane?

Crowd (going off). God save their Graces!

Stafford. Did you see her die?

Bagenhall. No, no; her innocent blood had blinded me.

You call me too black-blooded—true
enough

Her dark dead blood is in my heart with
mine.

If ever I cry out against the Pope
Her dark dead blood that ever moves
with mine

Will stir the living tongue and make the
cry.

Stafford. Yet doubtless you can tell
me how she died?

Bagenhall. Seventeen—and knew
eight languages—in music

Peerless—her needle perfect, and her
learning

Beyond the churchmen; yet so meek, so
modest,

So wife-like humble to the trivial boy
Mismatch'd with her for policy! I have
heard

She would not take a last farewell of him,
She fear'd it might unman him for his end.
She could not be unmann'd—no, nor
outwoman'd—

Seventeen—a rose of grace!

Girl never breathed to rival such a rose;
Rose never blew that equal'd such a bud.

Stafford. Pray you go on.

Bagenhall. She came upon the
scaffold,

And said she was condemn'd to die for
treason;

She had but follow'd the device of those
Her nearest kin: she thought they knew
the laws.

But for herself, she knew but little law,
And nothing of the titles to the crown;
She had no desire for that, and wrung
her hands,

And trusted God would save her thro' the
blood

Of Jesus Christ alone.

Stafford. Pray you go on.

Bagenhall. Then knelt and said the
Miserere Mei—

But all in English, mark you; rose again,
And, when the headsman pray'd to be
forgiven,

Said 'You will give me my true crown
at last,

But do it quickly'; then all wept but
she,

Who changed not colour when she saw
the block,

But ask'd him, childlike: 'Will you take
it off

Before I lay me down?' 'No, madam,'
he said,

Gasping; and when her innocent eyes
were bound,

She, with her poor blind hands feeling—
'where is it?

Where is it?'—You must fancy that
which follow'd,

If you have heart to do it!

Crowd (in the distance). God save
their Graces!

Stafford. Their Graces, our disgraces!
God confound them!

Why, she's grown bloodier! when I last
was here,

This was against her conscience—would
be murder!

Bagenhall. The 'Thou shalt do no
murder,' which God's hand

Wrote on her conscience, Mary rubb'd
out pale—

She could not make it white—and over
that,

Traced in the blackest text of Hell—
'Thou shalt!'

And sign'd it—Mary!

Stafford. Philip and the Pope
Must have sign'd too. I hear this
Legate's coming

To bring us absolution from the Pope.

The Lords and Commons will bow down
before him—

You are of the house? what will you do,
Sir Ralph?

Bagenhall. And why should I be
bolder than the rest,

Or honestest than all?

Stafford. But, sir, if I—

And oversea they say this state of yours
Hath no more mortice than a tower of
cards;

And that a puff would do it—then if I
And others made that move I touch'd
upon,

Back'd by the power of France, and
 landing here,
 Came with a sudden splendour, shout,
 and show,
 And dazzled men and deafen'd by some
 bright
 Loud venture, and the people so unquiet—
 And I the race of murder'd Buckingham—
 Not for myself, but for the kingdom—
 Sir,

I trust that you would fight along with us.

Bagenhall. No; you would fling your
 lives into the gulf.

Stafford. But if this Philip, as he's
 like to do,

Left Mary a wife-widow here alone,
 Set up a viceroy, sent his myriads hither
 To seize upon the forts and fleet, and
 make us

A Spanish province; would you not fight
 then?

Bagenhall. I think I should fight then.

Stafford. I am sure of it.

Hist! there's the face coming on here of
 one

Who knows me. I must leave you.
 Fare you well,

You'll hear of me again.

Bagenhall. Upon the scaffold.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—ROOM IN WHITEHALL PALACE

MARY. *Enter PHILIP and
 CARDINAL POLE*

Pole. Ave Maria, gratia plena, Bene-
 dicta tu in mulieribus.

Mary. Loyal and royal cousin,
 humblest thanks.

Had you a pleasant voyage up the river?

Pole. We had your royal barge, and
 that same chair,

Or rather throne of purple, on the deck.
 Our silver cross sparkled before the prow,
 The ripples twinkled at their diamond-
 dance,

The boats that follow'd, were as glowing-
 gay

T

As regal gardens; and your flocks of
 swans,

As fair and white as angels; and your
 shores

Wore in mine eyes the green of Paradise.
 My foreign friends, who dream'd us
 blanketed

In ever-closing fog, were much amazed
 To find as fair a sun as might have flash'd
 Upon their lake of Garda, fire the

Thames;

Our voyage by sea was all but miracle;
 And here the river flowing from the sea,
 Not toward it (for they thought not of
 our tides),

Seem'd as a happy miracle to make
 glide—

In quiet—home your banish'd country-
 man.

Mary. We heard that you were sick
 in Flanders, cousin.

Pole. A dizziness.

Mary. And how came you
 round again?

Pole. The scarlet thread of Rahab
 saved her life;

And mine, a little letting of the blood.

Mary. Well? now?

Pole. Ay, cousin, as the
 heathen giant

Had but to touch the ground, his force
 return'd—

Thus, after twenty years of banishment,
 Feeling my native land beneath my foot,
 I said thereto: 'Ah, native land of mine,
 Thou art much beholden to this foot of
 mine,

That hastes with full commission from
 the Pope

To absolve thee from thy guilt of heresy.
 Thou hast disgraced me and attainted me,
 And mark'd me ev'n as Cain, and I return
 As Peter, but to bless thee: make me well.'
 Methinks the good land heard me, for to-
 day

My heart beats twenty, when I see you,
 cousin.

Ah, gentle cousin, since your Herod's
 death,

How oft hath Peter knock'd at Mary's gate!

2 R

And Mary would have risen and let him in,
But, Mary, there were those within the
house

Who would not have it.

Mary. True, good cousin Pole;
And there were also those without the
house

Who would not have it.

Pole. I believe so, cousin.
State-policy and church-policy are con-
joint,

But Janus-faces looking diverse ways.
I fear the Emperor much misvalued me.
But all is well; 'twas ev'n the will of God,
Who, waiting till the time had ripen'd,
now,

Makes me his mouth of holy greeting.
'Hail,

Daughter of God, and saver of the faith.
Sit benedictus fructus ventris tui!'

Mary. Ah, heaven!

Pole. Unwell, your Grace?

Mary. No, cousin, happy—
Happy to see you; never yet so happy
Since I was crown'd.

Pole. Sweet cousin, you forget
That long low minster where you gave
your hand

To this great Catholic King.

Philip. Well said, Lord Legate.

Mary. Nay, not well said; I thought
of you, my liege,
Ev'n as I spoke.

Philip. Ay, Madam; my Lord Paget
Waits to present our Council to the Legate.
Sit down here, all; Madam, between us
you.

Pole. Lo, now you are enclosed with
boards of cedar,
Our little sister of the Song of Songs!
You are doubly fenced and shielded sitting
here

Between the two most high-set thrones
on earth,

The Emperor's highness happily symbol'd
by

The King your husband, the Pope's
Holiness

By mine own self.

Mary. True, cousin, I am happy.

When will you that we summon both our
houses

To take this absolution from your lips,
And be regather'd to the Papal fold?

Pole. In Britain's calendar the bright-
est day

Beheld our rough forefathers break their
Gods,

And clasp the faith in Christ; but after that
Might not St. Andrew's be her happiest
day?

Mary. Then these shall meet upon
St. Andrew's day.

Enter PAGET, who presents the Council.
Dumb show

Pole. I am an old man wearied with
my journey,
Ev'n with my joy. Permit me to with-
draw.

To Lambeth?

Philip. Ay, Lambeth has ousted
Cranmer.

It was not meet the heretic swine should
live

In Lambeth.

Mary. There or anywhere, or at all.

Philip. We have had it swept and
garnish'd after him.

Pole. Not for the seven devils to enter
in?

Philip. No, for we trust they parted
in the swine.

Pole. True, and I am the Angel of
the Pope.

Farewell, your Graces.

Philip. Nay, not here—to me;
I will go with you to the waterside.

Pole. Not be my Charon to the counter
side?

Philip. No, my Lord Legate, the
Lord Chancellor goes.

Pole. And unto no dead world; but
Lambeth Palace,

Henceforth a centre of the living faith.

[*Exeunt Philip, Pole, Paget, etc.*

Manet Mary

Mary. He hath awaked! he hath
awaked!

He stirs within the darkness !
 Oh, Philip, husband ! now thy love to mine
 Will cling more close, and those bleak
 manners thaw,
 That make me shamed and tongue-tied
 in my love.

The second Prince of Peace—
 The great unborn defender of the Faith,
 Who will avenge me of mine enemies—
 He comes, and my star rises.
 The stormy Wyatts and Northumberlands,
 The proud ambitions of Elizabeth,
 And all her fieriest partisans—are pale
 Before my star !
 The light of this new learning wanes and
 dies :

The ghosts of Luther and Zuinglius fade
 Into the deathless hell which is their doom
 Before my star !
 His sceptre shall go forth from Ind to Ind !
 His sword shall hew the heretic peoples
 down !

His faith shall clothe the world that will
 be his,
 Like universal air and sunshine ! Open,
 Ye everlasting gates ! The King is here !—
 My star, my son !

Enter PHILIP, DUKE OF ALVA, etc.

Oh, Philip, come with me ;
 Good news have I to tell you, news to
 make

Both of us happy—ay, the Kingdom too.
 Nay come with me—one moment !

Philip (to Alva). More than that :
 There was one here of late—William the
 Silent

They call him—he is free enough in talk,
 But tells me nothing. You will be, we
 trust,

Sometime the viceroy of those provinces—
 He must deserve his surname better.

Alva. Ay, sir ;
 Inherit the Great Silence.

Philip. True ; the provinces
 Are hard to rule and must be hardly ruled ;
 Most fruitful, yet, indeed, an empty rind,
 All hollow'd out with stinging heresies ;
 And for their heresies, Alva, they will fight ;
 You must break them or they break you.

Alva (proudly). The first.
Philip. Good.
 Well, Madam, this new happiness of mine !
 [*Exeunt.*]

Enter THREE PAGES

First Page. News, mates ! a miracle,
 a miracle ! news !
 The bells must ring ; Te Deums must be
 sung ;

The Queen hath felt the motion of her
 babe !

Second Page. Ay ; but see here !

First Page. See what ?

Second Page. This paper, Dickon.
 I found it fluttering at the palace gates :—
 ' The Queen of England is delivered of a
 dead dog ! '

Third Page. These are the things
 that madden her. Fie upon it !

First Page. Ay ; but I hear she hath
 a dropsy, lad,

Or a high-dropsy, as the doctors call it.

Third Page. Fie on her dropsy, so
 she have a dropsy !

I know that she was ever sweet to me.

First Page. For thou and thine are
 Roman to the core.

Third Page. So thou and thine must
 be. Take heed !

First Page. Not I,
 And whether this flash of news be false
 or true,

So the wine run, and there be revelry,
 Content am I. Let all the steeples clash,
 Till the sun dance, as upon Easter Day.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—GREAT HALL IN
 WHITEHALL

*At the far end a dais. On this three
 chairs, two under one canopy for MARY
 and PHILIP, another on the right of
 these for POLE. Under the dais on
 POLE's side, ranged along the wall,
 sit all the Spiritual Peers, and along
 the wall opposite, all the Temporal.
 The Commons on cross benches in front,
 a line of approach to the dais between*

them. In the foreground, SIR RALPH BAGENHALL and other Members of the Commons.

First Member. St. Andrew's day ; sit close, sit close, we are friends.

Is reconciled the word ? the Pope again ?
It must be thus ; and yet, cocksbody !
how strange

That Gardiner, once so one with all of us
Against this foreign marriage, should
have yielded

So utterly !—strange ! but stranger still
that he,

So fierce against the Headship of the
Pope,

Should play the second actor in this
pageant

That brings him in ; such aameleon he !

Second Member. This Gardiner turn'd
his coat in Henry's time ;
The serpent that hath slough'd will
slough again.

Third Member. Tut, then we all are
serpents.

Second Member. Speak for yourself.

Third Member. Ay, and for Gardiner !
being English citizen,
How should he bear a bridegroom out of
Spain ?

The Queen would have him ! being
English churchman,

How should he bear the headship of the
Pope ?

The Queen would have it ! Statesmen
that are wise

Shape a necessity, as a sculptor clay,
To their own model.

Second Member. Statesmen that are
wise

Take truth herself for model. What say
you ? [*To Sir Ralph Bagenhall.*

Bagenhall. We talk and talk.

First Member. Ay, and what use to
talk ?

Philip's no sudden alien—the Queen's
husband,

He's here, and king, or will be—yet
cocksbody !

So hated here ! I watch'd a hive of late ;

My seven-years' friend was with me, my
young boy ;

Out crept a wasp, with half the swarm
behind.

' Philip ! ' says he. I had to cuff the rogue
For infant treason.

Third Member. But they say that bees,
If any creeping life invade their hive
Too gross to be thrust out, will build him
round,

And bind him in from harming of their
combs.

And Philip by these articles is bound
From stirring hand or foot to wrong the
realm.

Second Member. By bonds of beeswax,
like your creeping thing ;
But your wise bees had stung him first
to death.

Third Member. Hush, hush !
You wrong the Chancellor : the clauses
added

To that same treaty which the emperor
sent us

Were mainly Gardiner's : that no foreigner
Hold office in the household, fleet, forts,
army ;

That if the Queen should die without a
child,

The bond between the kingdoms be
dissolved ;

That Philip should not mix us any way
With his French wars—

Second Member. Ay, ay, but what
security,

Good sir, for this, if Philip—

Third Member. Peace—the Queen,
Philip, and Pole. [*All rise, and stand.*

Enter MARY, PHILIP, and POLE

[*Gardiner conducts them to the three
chairs of state. Philip sits on the
Queen's left, Pole on her right.*

Gardiner. Our short-lived sun, before
his winter plunge,
Laughs at the last red leaf, and Andrew's
Day.

Mary. Should not this day be held in
after years

More solemn than of old ?

Philip. Madam, my wish
Echoes your Majesty's.

Pole. It shall be so.

Gardiner. Mine echoes both your
Graces'; (*aside*) but the Pope—
Can we not have the Catholic church as
well

Without as with the Italian? if we cannot,
Why then the Pope.

My lords of the upper house,
And ye, my masters, of the lower house,
Do ye stand fast by that which ye resolved?

Voices. We do.

Gardiner. And be you all one mind to
supplicate

The Legate here for pardon, and acknow-
ledge

The primacy of the Pope?

Voices. We are all one mind.

Gardiner. Then must I play the vassal
to this Pole. [*Aside.*

[*He draws a paper from under his
robes and presents it to the King
and Queen, who look through it
and return it to him; then ascends
a tribune, and reads.*

We, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal,
And Commons here in Parliament as-
sembled,

Presenting the whole body of this realm
Of England, and dominions of the same,
Do make most humble suit unto your
Majesties,

In our own name and that of all the state,
That by your gracious means and inter-
cession

Our supplication be exhibited
To the Lord Cardinal Pole, sent here as
Legate

From our most Holy Father Julius, Pope,
And from the Apostolic see of Rome;
And do declare our penitence and grief
For our long schism and disobedience,
Either in making laws and ordinances
Against the Holy Father's primacy,
Or else by doing or by speaking aught
Which might impugn or prejudice the
same;

By this our supplication promising,
As well for our own selves as all the realm,

That now we be and ever shall be quick,
Under and with your Majesties' autho-
rities,

To do to the utmost all that in us lies
Towards the abrogation and repeal
Of all such laws and ordinances made;
Whereon we humbly pray your Majesties,
As persons undefiled with our offence,
So to set forth this humble suit of ours
That we the rather by your intercession
May from the Apostolic see obtain,
Thro' this most reverend Father, absolu-
tion,

And full release from danger of all
censures

Of Holy Church that we be fall'n into,
So that we may, as children penitent,
Be once again received into the bosom
And unity of Universal Church;
And that this noble realm thro' after years
May in this unity and obedience
Unto the holy see and reigning Pope
Serve God and both your Majesties.

Voices. Amen. [*All sit.*

[*He again presents the petition to the
King and Queen, who hand it
reverentially to Pole.*

Pole (sitting). This is the loveliest day
that ever smiled

On England. All her breath should,
incenselike,
Rise to the heavens in grateful praise of
Him

Who now recalls her to His ancient fold.
Lo! once again God to this realm hath
given

A token of His more especial Grace;
For as this people were the first of all
The islands call'd into the dawning church
Out of the dead, deep night of heathen-
dom,

So now are these the first whom God
hath given

Grace to repent and sorrow for their
schism;

And if your penitence be not mockery,
Oh how the blessed angels who rejoice
Over one saved do triumph at this hour
In the reborn salvation of a land

So noble.

[*A pause.*

For ourselves we do protest
That our commission is to heal, not harm ;
We come not to condemn, but reconcile ;
We come not to compel, but call again ;
We come not to destroy, but edify ;
Nor yet to question things already done ;
These are forgiven—matters of the past—
And range with jetsam and with offal
thrown
Into the blind sea of forgetfulness. [*A pause.*
Ye have reversed the attainder laid on us
By him who sack'd the house of God ;
and we,
Amplier than any field on our poor earth
Can render thanks in fruit for being sown,
Do here and now repay you sixty-fold,
A hundred, yea, a thousand thousand-fold,
With heaven for earth.

[*Rising and stretching forth his hands.*
All kneel but Sir Ralph Bagenhall,
who rises and remains standing.

The Lord who hath redeem'd us
With His own blood, and wash'd us from
our sins,
To purchase for Himself a stainless bride ;
He, whom the Father hath appointed
Head

Of all his church, He by His mercy
absolve you ! [*A pause.*

And we by that authority Apostolic
Given unto us, his Legate, by the Pope,
Our Lord and Holy Father, Julius,
God's Vicar and Vicegerent upon earth,
Do here absolve you and deliver you
And every one of you, and all the realm
And its dominions from all heresy,
All schism, and from all and every cen-
sure,

Judgment, and pain accruing thereupon ;
And also we restore you to the bosom
And unity of Universal Church.

[*Turning to Gardiner.*
Our letters of commission will declare
this plainlier.

[*Queen heard sobbing. Cries of*
Amen ! Amen ! Some of the
Members embrace one another.
All but Sir Ralph Bagenhall pass
out into the neighbouring chapel,
whence is heard the Te Deum.

Bagenhall. We strove against the
papacy from the first,
In William's time, in our first Edward's
time,
And in my master Henry's time ; but now,
The unity of Universal Church,
Mary would have it ; and this Gardiner
follows ;
The unity of Universal Hell,
Philip would have it ; and this Gardiner
follows !
A Parliament of imitative apes !
Sheep at the gap which Gardiner takes,
who not
Believes the Pope, nor any of them
believe—
These spaniel-Spaniard English of the
time,
Who rub their fawning noses in the dust,
For that is Philip's gold-dust, and adore
This Vicar of their Vicar. Would I had
been
Born Spaniard ! I had held my head up
then.
I am ashamed that I am Bagenhall,
English.

Enter OFFICER

Officer. Sir Ralph Bagenhall !

Bagenhall. What of that ?

Officer. You were the one sole man in
either house

Who stood upright when both the houses
fell.

Bagenhall. The houses fell !

Officer. I mean the houses knelt
Before the Legate.

Bagenhall. Do not scrimp your
phrase,

But stretch it wider ; say when England
fell.

Officer. I say you were the one sole
man who stood.

Bagenhall. I am the one sole man in
either house,

Perchance in England, loves her like a son.

Officer. Well, you one man, because
you stood upright,
Her Grace the Queen commands you to
the Tower.

Bagenhall. As traitor, or as heretic,
or for what?

Officer. If any man in any way would
be

The one man, he shall be so to his cost.

Bagenhall. What ! will she have my
head ?

Officer. A round fine likelier.

Your pardon. [*Calling to Attendant.*

By the river to the Tower. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—WHITEHALL. A ROOM
IN THE PALACE

MARY, GARDINER, POLE, PAGET,
BONNER, *etc.*

Mary. The King and I, my Lords,
now that all traitors

Against our royal state have lost the heads
Wherewith they plotted in their treason-
ous malice,

Have talk'd together, and are well agreed
That those old statutes touching Lollard-
ism

To bring the heretic to the stake, should be
No longer a dead letter, but requicken'd.

One of the Council. Why, what hath
fluster'd Gardiner? how he rubs

His forelock !

Paget. I have changed a word with
him

In coming, and may change a word again.

Gardiner. Madam, your Highness is
our sun, the King

And you together our two suns in one ;

And so the beams of both may shine upon
us,

The faith that seem'd to droop will feel
your light,

Lift head, and flourish ; yet not light
alone,

There must be heat—there must be heat
enough

To scorch and wither heresy to the root.
For what saith Christ ? 'Compel them

to come in.'

And what saith Paul ? 'I would they
were cut off

That trouble you.' Let the dead letter live !

Trace it in fire, that all the louts to whom
Their A B C is darkness, clowns and
grooms

May read it ! so you quash rebellion too,
For heretic and traitor are all one :

Two vipers of one breed—an amphibæna,
Each end a sting : Let the dead letter
burn !

Paget. Yet there be some disloyal
Catholics,

And many heretics loyal ; heretic throats
Cried no God-bless-her to the Lady Jane,
But shouted in Queen Mary. So there be
Some traitor-heretic, there is axe and cord.
To take the lives of others that are loyal,
And by the churchman's pitiless doom of
fire,

Were but a thankless policy in the crown,
Ay, and against itself ; for there are many.

Mary. If we could burn out heresy,
my Lord Paget,

We reckon not tho' we lost this crown of
England—

Ay ! tho' it were ten Englands !

Gardiner. Right, your Grace.

Paget, you are all for this poor life of ours,
And care but little for the life to be.

Paget. I have some time, for curious-
ness, my Lord,

Watch'd children playing at *their* life to
be,

And cruel at it, killing helpless flies ;

Such is our time—all times for aught I
know.

Gardiner. We kill the heretics that
sting the soul—

They, with right reason, flies that prick
the flesh.

Paget. They had not reach'd right
reason ; little children !

They kill'd but for their pleasure and the
power

They felt in killing.

Gardiner. A spice of Satan, ha !

Why, good ! what then ? granted !—we
are fallen creatures ;

Look to your Bible, Paget ! we are fallen.

Paget. I am but of the laity, my Lord
Bishop,

And may not read your Bible, yet I found

One day, a wholesome scripture, 'Little children,

Love one another.'

Gardiner. Did you find a scripture,
'I come not to bring peace but a sword'?

The sword

Is in her Grace's hand to smite with.
Paget,

You stand up here to fight for heresy,
You are more than guess'd at as a heretic,
And on the steep-up track of the true faith
Your lapses are far seen.

Paget. The faultless *Gardiner* !

Mary. You brawl beyond the ques-
tion ; speak, Lord Legate !

Pole. Indeed, I cannot follow with
your Grace :

Rather would say—the shepherd doth
not kill

The sheep that wander from his flock, but
sends

His careful dog to bring them to the fold.
Look to the Netherlands, wherein have
been

Such holocausts of heresy ! to what end ?
For yet the faith is not established there.

Gardiner. The end's not come.

Pole. No—nor this way
will come,

Seeing there lie two ways to every end,
A better and a worse—the worse is here
To persecute, because to persecute
Makes a faith hated, and is furthermore
No perfect witness of a perfect faith
In him who persecutes : when men are tost
On tides of strange opinion, and not sure
Of their own selves, they are wroth with
their own selves,

And thence with others ; then, who lights
the faggot ?

Not the full faith, no, but the lurking
doubt.

Old Rome, that first made martyrs in the
Church,

Trembled for her own gods, for these
were trembling—

But when did our Rome tremble ?

Paget. Did she not

In Henry's time and Edward's ?

Pole. What, my Lord !

The Church on Peter's rock ? never ! I
have seen

A pine in Italy that cast its shadow
Athwart a cataract ; firm stood the pine—
The cataract shook the shadow. To my
mind,

The cataract typed the headlong plunge
and fall

Of heresy to the pit : the pine was Rome.
You see, my Lords,

It was the shadow of the Church that
trembled ;

Your church was but the shadow of a
church,

Wanting the Papal mitre.

Gardiner (*muttering*). Here be tropes.

Pole. And tropes are good to clothe a
naked truth,

And make it look more seemly.

Gardiner. Tropes again !

Pole. You are hard to please. Then
without tropes, my Lord,

An overmuch severeness, I repeat,
When faith is wavering makes the waverer
pass

Into more settled hatred of the doctrines
Of those who rule, which hatred by and by
Involves the ruler (thus there springs to
light

That Centaur of a monstrous Common-
weal,

The traitor-heretic) then tho' some may
quail,

Yet others are that dare the stake and fire,
And their strong torment bravely borne,
begets

An admiration and an indignation,
And hot desire to imitate ; so the plague
Of schism spreads ; were there but three
or four

Of these misleaders, yet I would not say
Burn ! and we cannot burn whole towns ;
they are many,

As my Lord *Paget* says.

Gardiner. Yet my Lord Cardinal—

Pole. I am your Legate ; please you
let me finish.

Methinks that under our Queen's regimen
We might go softlier than with crimson
rowel

And streaming lash. When Herod-
Henry first
Began to batter at your English Church,
This was the cause, and hence the judg-
ment on her.

She seethed with such adulteries, and the
lives

Of many among your churchmen were so
foul

That heaven wept and earth blush'd. I
would advise

That we should thoroughly cleanse the
Church within

Before these bitter statutes be requicken'd.

So after that when she once more is seen
White as the light, the spotless bride of
Christ,

Like Christ himself on Tabor, possibly
The Lutheran may be won to her again ;
Till when, my Lords, I counsel tolerance.

Gardiner. What, if a mad dog bit
your hand, my Lord,

Would you not chop the bitten finger off,
Lest your whole body should madden
with the poison ?

I would not, were I Queen, tolerate the
heretic,

No, not an hour. The ruler of a land
Is bounden by his power and place to see
His people be not poison'd. Tolerate
them !

Why ? do they tolerate you ? Nay, many
of them

Would burn—have burnt each other ;
call they not

The one true faith, a loathsome idol-
worship ?

Beware, Lord Legate, of a heavier crime
Than heresy is itself ; beware, I say,
Lest men accuse you of indifference
To all faiths, all religion ; for you know
Right well that you yourself have been
supposed

Tainted with Lutheranism in Italy.

Pole (angered). But you, my Lord,
beyond all supposition,

In clear and open day were congruent
With that vile Cranmer in the accursed lie
Of good Queen Catharine's divorce—the
spring

Of all those evils that have flow'd upon
us ;

For you yourself have truckled to the
tyrant,

And done your best to bastardise our
Queen,

For which God's righteous judgment fell
upon you

In your five years of imprisonment, my
Lord,

Under young Edward. Who so bolster'd
up

The gross King's headship of the Church,
or more

Denied the Holy Father !

Gardiner. Ha ! what ! eh ?

But you, my Lord, a polish'd gentleman,
A bookman, flying from the heat and
tussle,

You lived among your vines and oranges,
In your soft Italy yonder ! You were
sent for,

You were appeal'd to, but you still
prefer'd

Your learned leisure. As for what I did
I suffer'd and repented. You, Lord
Legate

And Cardinal-Deacon, have not now to
learn

That ev'n St. Peter in his time of fear
Denied his Master, ay, and thrice, my
Lord.

Pole. But not for five-and-twenty
years, my Lord.

Gardiner. Ha ! good ! it seems then
I was summon'd hither

But to be mock'd and baited. Speak,
friend Bonner,

And tell this learned Legate he lacks zeal.
The Church's evil is not as the King's,

Cannot be heal'd by stroking. The mad
bite

Must have the cautery—tell him—and at
once.

What would'st thou do hadst thou his
power, thou

That layest so long in heretic bonds with
me ;

Would'st thou not burn and blast them
root and branch ?

Bonner. Ay, after you, my Lord.

Gardiner. Nay, God's passion, before me ! speak !

Bonner. I am on fire until I see them flame.

Gardiner. Ay, the psalm - singing weavers, cobblers, scum—

But this most noble prince Plantagenet,
Our good Queen's cousin—dallying over seas

Even when his brother's, nay, his noble mother's,

Head fell—

Pole. Peace, madman !

Thou stirrest up a grief thou canst not fathom.

Thou Christian Bishop, thou Lord Chancellor

Of England ! no more rein upon thine anger

Than any child ! Thou mak'st me much ashamed

That I was for a moment wroth at thee.

Mary. I come for counsel and ye give me feuds,

Like dogs that set to watch their master's gate,

Fall, when the thief is ev'n within the walls,

To worrying one another. My Lord Chancellor,

You have an old trick of offending us ;

And but that you are art and part with us

In purging heresy, well we might, for this

Your violence and much roughness to the Legate,

Have shut you from our counsels. Cousin Pole,

You are fresh from brighter lands. Retire with me.

His Highness and myself (so you allow us)

Will let you learn in peace and privacy

What power this cooler sun of England hath

In breeding godless vermin. And pray Heaven

That you may see according to our sight. Come, cousin.

[*Exeunt Queen and Pole, etc.*]

Gardiner. Pole has the Plantagenet face,

But not the force made them our mightiest kings.

Fine eyes—but melancholy, irresolute—
A fine beard, Bonner, a very full fine beard.

But a weak mouth, an indeterminate—ha ?

Bonner. Well, a weak mouth, perchance.

Gardiner. And not like thine
To gorge a heretic whole, roasted or raw.

Bonner. I'd do my best, my Lord ;
but yet the Legate

Is here as Pope and Master of the Church,
And if he go not with you—

Gardiner. Tut, Master Bishop,
Our bashful Legate, saw'st not how he flush'd ?

Touch him upon his old heretical talk,
He'll burn a diocese to prove his orthodoxy.

And let him call me truckler. In those times,

Thou knowest we had to dodge, or duck,
or die ;

I kept my head for use of Holy Church ;
And see you, we shall have to dodge again,

And let the Pope trample our rights, and plunge

His foreign fist into our island Church

To plump the leaner pouch of Italy.

For a time, for a time.

Why ? that these statutes may be put in force,

And that his fan may thoroughly purge his floor.

Bonner. So then you hold the Pope—

Gardiner. I hold the Pope !

What do I hold him ? what do I hold the Pope ?

Come, come, the morsel stuck—this Cardinal's fault—

I have gulped it down. I am wholly for the Pope,

Utterly and altogether for the Pope,
The Eternal Peter of the changeless chair,
Crown'd slave of slaves, and mitred king
of kings,

God upon earth ! what more ? what would
you have ?
Hence, let's be gone.

Enter USHER

Usher. Well that you be not gone,
My Lord. The Queen, most wroth at
first with you,
Is now content to grant you full forgive-
ness,
So that you crave full pardon of the
Legate.

I am sent to fetch you.

Gardiner. Doth Pole yield, sir, ha !
Did you hear 'em ? were you by ?

Usher. I cannot tell you,
His bearing is so courtly-delicate ;
And yet methinks he falters : their two
Graces

Do so dear-cousin and royal-cousin him,
So press on him the duty which as Legate
He owes himself, and with such royal
smiles—

Gardiner. Smiles that burn men.
Bonner, it will be carried.
He falters, ha ? 'fore God, we change
and change ;

Men now are bow'd and old, the doctors
tell you,
At three-score years ; then if we change
at all

We needs must do it quickly ; it is an age
Of brief life, and brief purpose, and brief
patience,

As I have shown to-day. I am sorry for it
If Pole be like to turn. Our old friend
Cranmer,

Your more especial love, hath turn'd so
often,

He knows not where he stands, which,
if this pass,

We two shall have to teach him ; let 'em
look to it,

Cranmer and Hooper, Ridley and Latimer,
Rogers and Ferrar, for their time is come,
Their hour is hard at hand, their 'dies
Irae,'

Their 'dies Illa,' which will test their sect.
I feel it but a duty—you will find in it
Pleasure as well as duty, worthy Bonner,—

To test their sect. Sir, I attend the Queen
To crave most humble pardon—of her most
Royal, Infallible, Papal Legate-cousin.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.—WOODSTOCK

ELIZABETH, LADY IN WAITING

Elizabeth. So they have sent poor
Courtenay over sea.

Lady. And banish'd us to Woodstock,
and the fields.

The colours of our Queen are green and
white,

These fields are only green, they make
me gape.

Elizabeth. There's whitethorn, girl.

Lady. Ay, for an hour in May.
But court is always May, buds out in
masques,

Breaks into feather'd merriments, and
flowers

In silken pageants. Why do they keep
us here ?

Why still suspect your Grace ?

Elizabeth. Hard upon both.

[Writes on the window with a diamond.]

Much suspected, of me

Nothing proven can be.

Quoth Elizabeth, prisoner.

Lady. What hath your Highness
written ?

Elizabeth. A true rhyme.

Lady. Cut with a diamond ; so to last
like truth.

Elizabeth. Ay, if truth last.

Lady. But truth, they say, will out,
So it must last. It is not like a word,
That comes and goes in uttering.

Elizabeth. Truth, a word !
The very Truth and very Word are one.
But truth of story, which I glanced at, girl,
Is like a word that comes from olden days,
And passes thro' the peoples : every tongue
Alters it passing, till it spells and speaks
Quite other than at first.

Lady. I do not follow.

Elizabeth. How many names in the
long sweep of time

That so foreshortens greatness, may but
hang
On the chance mention of some fool that
once

Brake bread with us, perhaps: and my
poor chronicle

Is but of glass. Sir Henry Bedingsfield
May split it for a spite.

Lady. God grant it last,
And witness to your Grace's innocence,
Till doomsday melt it.

Elizabeth. Or a second fire,
Like that which lately crackled underfoot
And in this very chamber, fuse the glass,
And char us back again into the dust
We spring from. Never peacock against
rain

Scream'd as you did for water.

Lady. And I got it.
I woke Sir Henry—and he's true to you—
I read his honest horror in his eyes.

Elizabeth. Or true to you?

Lady. Sir Henry Bedingsfield!
I will have no man true to me, your Grace,
But one that pares his nails; to me? the
clown!

Elizabeth. Out, girl! you wrong a
noble gentleman.

Lady. For, like his cloak, his man-
ners want the nap
And gloss of court; but of this fire he says,
Nay swears, it was no wicked wilfulness,
Only a natural chance.

Elizabeth. A chance—perchance
One of those wicked wilfuls that men
make,

Nor shame to call it nature. Nay, I know
They hunt my blood. Save for my daily
range

Among the pleasant fields of Holy Writ
I might despair. But there hath some
one come;

The house is all in movement. Hence,
and see. [*Exit Lady.*]

Milkmaid (singing without)

Shame upon you, Robin,
Shame upon you now!

Kiss me would you? with my hands
Milking the cow?

Daisies grow again,
Kingcups blow again,
And you came and kiss'd me milking the cow.

Robin came behind me,
Kiss'd me well I vow;
Cuff him could I? with my hands
Milking the cow?
Swallows fly again,
Cuckoos cry again,
And you came and kiss'd me milking the cow.

Come, Robin, Robin,
Come and kiss me now;
Help it can I? with my hands
Milking the cow?
Ringdoves coo again,
All things woo again.
Come behind and kiss me milking the cow!

Elizabeth. Right honest and red-
cheek'd; Robin was violent,
And she was crafty—a sweet violence,
And a sweet craft. I would I were a
milkmaid,

To sing, love, marry, churn, brew, bake,
and die,

Then have my simple headstone by the
church,

And all things lived and ended honestly.
I could not if I would. I am Harry's
daughter:

Gardiner would have my head. They are
not sweet,

The violence and the craft that do divide
The world of nature; what is weak must
lie;

The lion needs but roar to guard his young;
The lapwing lies, says 'here' when they
are there.

Threaten the child; 'I'll scourge you if
you did it':

What weapon hath the child, save his
soft tongue,

To say 'I did not'? and my rod's the block.
I never lay my head upon the pillow

But that I think, 'Wilt thou lie there to-
morrow?'

How oft the falling axe, that never fell,
Hath shock'd me back into the daylight
truth

That it may fall to-day! Those damp,
black, dead

Nights in the Tower ; dead—with the
fear of death

Too dead ev'n for a death-watch ! Toll
of a bell,

Stroke of a clock, the scurrying of a rat
Affrighted me, and then delighted me,
For there was life—And there was life in
death—

The little murder'd princes, in a pale light,
Rose hand in hand, and whisper'd, ' come
away !

The civil wars are gone for evermore :
Thou last of all the Tudors, come away !
With us is peace ! ' The last ? It was a
dream ;

I must not dream, not wink, but watch.
She has gone,

Maid Marian to her Robin—by and by
Both happy ! a fox may filch a hen by night,
And make a morning outcry in the yard ;
But there's no Renard here to ' catch her
tripping.'

Catch me who ' can ; yet, sometime I have
wish'd

That I were caught, and kill'd away at once
Out of the flutter. The gray rogue,
Gardiner,

Went on his knees, and pray'd me to confess
In Wyatt's business, and to cast myself
Upon the good Queen's mercy ; ay, when,
my Lord ?

God save the Queen ! My jailor—

Enter SIR HENRY BEDINGFIELD

Bedingfield. One, whose bolts,
That jail you from free life, bar you from
death.

There haunt some Papist ruffians hereabout
Would murder you.

Elizabeth. I thank you heartily, sir,
But I am royal, tho' your prisoner,
And God hath blest or cursed me with a
nose—

Your boots are from the horses.

Bedingfield. Ay, my Lady.
When next there comes a missive from
the Queen

It shall be all my study for one hour
To rose and lavender my horsiness,
Before I dare to glance upon your Grace.

Elizabeth. A missive from the Queen :
last time she wrote,

I had like to have lost my life : it takes
my breath :

O God, sir, do you look upon your boots,
Are you so small a man ? Help me :
what think you,

Is it life or death ?

Bedingfield. I thought not on my
boots ;

The devil take all boots were ever made
Since man went barefoot. See, I lay it
here,

For I will come no nearer to your Grace ;
[*Laying down the letter.*

And, whether it bring you bitter news or
sweet,

And God hath given your Grace a nose,
or not,

I'll help you, if I may.

Elizabeth. Your pardon, then ;
It is the heat and narrowness of the cage
That makes the captive testy ; with free
wing

The world were all one Araby. Leave
me now,

Will you, companion to myself, sir ?

Bedingfield. Will I ?
With most exceeding willingness, I will ;
You know I never come till I be call'd.

[*Exit.*

Elizabeth. It lies there folded : is there
venom in it ?

A snake—and if I touch it, it may sting.
Come, come, the worst !

Best wisdom is to know the worst at once.

[*Reads :*

' It is the King's wish, that you
should wed Prince Philibert of Savoy.
You are to come to Court on the instant ;
and think of this in your coming.

' MARY THE QUEEN.'

Think ! I have many thoughts ;

I think there may be birdlime here for
me ;

I think they fain would have me from the
realm ;

I think the Queen may never bear a
child ;

I think that I may be some time the
Queen,
Then, Queen indeed : no foreign prince
or priest
Should fill my throne, myself upon the
steps.

I think I will not marry anyone,
Specially not this landless Philibert
Of Savoy ; but, if Philip menace me,
I think that I will play with Philibert,—
As once the Holy Father did with
mine,
Before my father married my good
mother,—
For fear of Spain.

Enter LADY

Lady. O Lord ! your Grace, your
Grace,
I feel so happy : it seems that we shall
fly
These bald, blank fields, and dance into
the sun
That shines on princes.

Elizabeth. Yet, a moment since,
I wish'd myself the milkmaid singing
here,
To kiss and cuff among the birds and
flowers—
A right rough life and healthful.

Lady. But the wench
Hath her own troubles ; she is weeping
now ;
For the wrong Robin took her at her
word.
Then the cow kick'd, and all her milk
was spilt.

Your Highness such a milkmaid ?

Elizabeth. I had kept
My Robins and my cows in sweeter
order
Had I been such.

Lady (slyly). And had your Grace a
Robin ?

Elizabeth. Come, come, you are chill
here ; you want the sun
That shines at court ; make ready for the
journey.
Pray God, we 'scape the sunstroke.
Ready at once. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.—LONDON. A ROOM IN
THE PALACE

LORD PETRE *and* LORD WILLIAM
HOWARD

Petre. You cannot see the Queen.
Renard denied her,
Ev'n now to me.

Howard. Their Flemish go-between
And all-in-all. I came to thank her
Majesty
For freeing my friend Bagenhall from the
Tower ;

A grace to me ! Mercy, that herb-of-grace,
Flowers now but seldom.

Petre. Only now perhaps,
Because the Queen hath been three days
in tears
For Philip's going—like the wild hedge-
rose

Of a soft winter, possible, not probable,
However you have prov'n it.

Howard. I must see her.

Enter RENARD

Renard. My Lords, you cannot see
her Majesty.

Howard. Why then the King ! for I
would have him bring it
Home to the leisure wisdom of his Queen,
Before he go, that since these statutes past,
Gardiner out-Gardiners Gardiner in his
heat,
Bonner cannot out-Bonner his own self—
Beast !—but they play with fire as chil-
dren do,

And burn the house. I know that these
are breeding

A fierce resolve and fixt heart-hate in men
Against the King, the Queen, the Holy
Father,

The faith itself. Can I not see him ?

Renard. Not now.
And in all this, my Lord, her Majesty
Is flint of flint, you may strike fire from
her,

Not hope to melt her. I will give your
message.

[*Exeunt* Petre *and* Howard.

Enter PHILIP (musing)

Philip. She will not have Prince
Philibert of Savoy,
I talk'd with her in vain—says she will
live
And die true maid—a goodly creature too.
Would *she* had been the Queen! yet she
must have him;
She troubles England: that she breathes
in England
Is life and lungs to every rebel birth
That passes out of embryo.

Simon Renard!—

This Howard, whom they fear, what was
he saying?

Renard. What your imperial father
said, my liege,
To deal with heresy gentlier. Gardiner
burns,
And Bonner burns; and it would seem
this people
Care more for our brief life in their wet
land,
Than yours in happier Spain. I told my
Lord

He should not vex her Highness; she
would say

These are the means God works with,
that His church

May flourish.

Philip. Ay, sir, but in statesmanship
To strike too soon is oft to miss the blow.
Thou knowest I bad my chaplain, Castro,
preach

Against these burnings.

Renard. And the Emperor
Approved you, and when last he wrote,
declared

His comfort in your Grace that you were
bland

And affable to men of all estates,
In hope to charm them from their hate of
Spain.

Philip. In hope to crush all heresy
under Spain.

But, Renard, I am sicker staying here
Than any sea could make me passing hence,
Tho' I be ever deadly sick at sea.

So sick am I with biding for this child.

Is it the fashion in this clime for women
To go twelve months in bearing of a
child?

The nurses yawn'd, the cradle gaped,
they led

Processions, chanted litanies, clash'd their
bells,

Shot off their lying cannon, and her
priests

Have preach'd, the fools, of this fair
prince to come;

Till, by St. James, I find myself the fool.
Why do you lift your eyebrow at me thus?

Renard. I never saw your Highness
moved till now.

Philip. So weary am I of this wet
land of theirs,

And every soul of man that breathes
therein.

Renard. My liege, we must not drop
the mask before

The masquerade is over—

Philip. —Have I dropt it?
I have but shown a loathing face to you,
Who knew it from the first.

Enter MARY

Mary (aside). With Renard. . Still
Parleying with Renard, all the day with
Renard,

And scarce a greeting all the day for me—
And goes to-morrow. [*Exit Mary.*

*Philip (to Renard, who advances to
him).* Well, sir, is there more?

Renard (who has perceived the Queen).
May Simon Renard speak a single
word?

Philip. Ay.

Renard. And be forgiven for it?

Philip. Simon Renard
Knows me too well to speak a single word
That could not be forgiven.

Renard. Well, my liege,
Your Grace hath a most chaste and loving
wife.

Philip. Why not? The Queen of
Philip should be chaste.

Renard. Ay, but, my Lord, you know
what Virgil sings,

Woman is various and most mutable.

Philip. She play the harlot ! never.

Renard. No, sire, no,
Not dream'd of by the rabidest gospeller.
There was a paper throw'n into the palace,
'The King hath wearied of his barren
bride.'

She came upon it, read it, and then rent it,
With all the rage of one who hates a
truth

He cannot but allow. Sire, I would
have you—

What should I say, I cannot pick my
words—

Be somewhat less—majestic to your
Queen.

Philip. Am I to change my manners,
Simon Renard,
Because these islanders are brutal beasts?
Or would you have me turn a sonneteer,
And warble those brief-sighted eyes of
hers?

Renard. Brief-sighted tho' they be,
I have seen them, sire,
When you perchance were trifling royally
With some fair dame of court, suddenly
fill

With such fierce fire—had it been fire
, indeed

It would have burnt both speakers.

Philip. Ay, and then?

Renard. Sire, might it not be policy
in some matter
Of small importance now and then to
cede

A point to her demand?

Philip. Well, I am going.

Renard. For should her love when
you are gone, my liege,

Witness these papers, there will not be
wanting

Those that will urge her injury—should
her love—

And I have known such women more
than one—

Veer to the counterpoint, and jealousy
Hath in it an alchemic force to fuse
Almost into one metal love and hate,—
And she impress her wrongs upon her
Council,

And these again upon her Parliament—

We are not loved here, and would be
then perhaps

Not so well holpen in our wars with
France,

As else we might be—here she comes.

Enter MARY

Mary. O Philip !

Nay, must you go indeed?

Philip. Madam, I must.

Mary. The parting of a husband and
a wife

Is like the cleaving of a heart ; one half
Will flutter here, one there.

Philip. You say true, Madam.

Mary. The Holy Virgin will not have
me yet

Lose the sweet hope that I may bear a
prince.

If such a prince were born and you not
here !

Philip. I should be here if such a
prince were born.

Mary. But must you go?

Philip. Madam, you know my father,
Retiring into cloistral solitude
To yield the remnant of his years to
heaven,

Will shift the yoke and weight of all the
world

From off his neck to mine. We meet at
Brussels.

But since mine absence will not be for
long,

Your Majesty shall go to Dover with me,
And wait my coming back.

Mary. To Dover? no,

I am too feeble. I will go to Greenwich,
So you will have me with you ; and there
watch

All that is gracious in the breath of
heaven

Draw with your sails from our poor land,
and pass

And leave me, Philip, with my prayers
for you.

Philip. And doubtless I shall profit
by your prayers.

Mary. Methinks that would you tarry
one day more

(The news was sudden) I could mould myself

To bear your going better ; will you do it ?

Philip. Madam, a day may sink or save a realm.

Mary. A day may save a heart from breaking too.

Philip. Well, Simon Renard, shall we stop a day ?

Renard. Your Grace's business will not suffer, sire,

For one day more, so far as I can tell.

Philip. Then one day more to please her Majesty.

Mary. The sunshine sweeps across my life again.

O if I knew you felt this parting, Philip, As I do !

Philip. By St. James I do protest, Upon the faith and honour of a Spaniard, I am vastly grieved to leave your Majesty. Simon, is supper ready ?

Renard. Ay, my liege, I saw the covers laying.

Philip. Let us have it. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—A ROOM IN THE PALACE

MARY, CARDINAL POLE

Mary. What have you there ?

Pole. So please your Majesty,

A long petition from the foreign exiles

To spare the life of Cranmer. Bishop

Thirlby,

And my Lord Paget and Lord William

Howard,

Crave, in the same cause, hearing of your Grace.

Hath he not written himself—infratuated—
To sue you for his life ?

Mary. His life ? Oh, no ;

Not sued for that—he knows it were in vain.

But so much of the anti-papal leaven

Works in him yet, he hath pray'd me not to sully

Mine own prerogative, and degrade the realm

By seeking justice at a stranger's hand
Against my natural subject. King and Queen,

To whom he owes his loyalty after God,
Shall these accuse him to a foreign prince ?
Death would not grieve him more. I cannot be

True to this realm of England and the Pope

Together, says the heretic.

Pole. And there errs ;

As he hath ever err'd thro' vanity.

A secular kingdom is but as the body

Lacking a soul ; and in itself a beast.

The Holy Father in a secular kingdom

Is as the soul descending out of heaven

Into a body generate.

Mary. Write to him, then.

Pole. I will.

Mary. And sharply, Pole.

Pole. Here come the Cranmerites !

Enter THIRLBY, LORD PAGET, LORD
WILLIAM HOWARD

Howard. Health to your Grace !

Good morrow, my Lord Cardinal ;

We make our humble prayer unto your Grace.

That Cranmer may withdraw to foreign parts,

Or into private life within the realm.

In several bills and declarations, Madam,
He hath recanted all his heresies.

Paget. Ay, ay ; if Bonner have not
forged the bills. [*Aside.*]

Mary. Did not More die, and Fisher ?
he must burn.

Howard. He hath recanted, Madam.

Mary. The better for him.

He burns in Purgatory, not in Hell.

Howard. Ay, ay, your Grace ; but it
was never seen

That any one recanting thus at full,
As Cranmer hath, came to the fire on earth.

Mary. It will be seen now, then.

Thirlby. O Madam, Madam !

I thus implore you, low upon my knees,

To reach the hand of mercy to my friend.
I have err'd with him ; with him I have
recanted.

What human reason is there why my
friend

Should meet with lesser mercy than my-
self?

Mary. My Lord of Ely, this. After
a riot

We hang the leaders, let their following
go.

Cranmer is head and father of these here-
sies,

New learning as they call it ; yea, may
God

Forget me at most need when I forget
Her foul divorce—my sainted mother—
No !—

Howard. Ay, ay, but mighty doctors
doubted there.

The Pope himself waver'd ; and more
than one

Row'd in that galley—Gardiner to wit,
Whom truly I deny not to have been
Your faithful friend and trusty councillor.
Hath not your Highness ever read his
book,

His tractate upon True Obedience,
Writ by himself and Bonner?

Mary. I will take
Such order with all bad, heretical books
That none shall hold them in his house
and live,

Henceforward. No, my Lord.

Howard. Then never read it.
The truth is here. Your father was a man
Of such colossal kinghood, yet so cour-
teous,

Except when wroth, you scarce could
meet his eye

And hold your own ; and were he wroth
indeed,

You held it less, or not at all. I say,
Your father had a will that beat men
down—

Your father had a brain that beat men
down—

Pole. Not me, my Lord.

Howard. No, for you were not here ;
You sit upon this fallen Cranmer's throne ;

And it would more become you, my Lord
Legate,

To join a voice, so potent with her High-
ness,

To ours in plea for Cranmer than to stand
On naked self-assertion.

Mary. All your voices
Are waves on flint. The heretic must
burn.

Howard. Yet once he saved your
Majesty's own life ;

Stood out against the King in your behalf,
At his own peril.

Mary. I know not if he did ;
And if he did I care not, my Lord Howard.
My life is not so happy, no such boon,
That I should spare to take a heretic
priest's,

Who saved it or not saved. Why do you
vex me?

Paget. Yet to save Cranmer were to
serve the Church,

Your Majesty's I mean ; he is effaced,
Self-blotted out ; so wounded in his
honour,

He can but creep down into some dark
hole

Like a hurt beast, and hide himself and
die ;

But if you burn him,—well, your High-
ness knows

The saying, ' Martyr's blood—seed of the
Church.'

Mary. Of the true Church ; but his
is none, nor will be.

You are too politic for me, my Lord
Paget.

And if he have to live so loath'd a life,
It were more merciful to burn him now.

Thirlby. O yet relent. O, Madam,
if you knew him

As I do, ever gentle, and so gracious,
With all his learning—

Mary. Yet a heretic still.
His learning makes his burning the more
just.

Thirlby. So worship of all those that
came across him ;

The stranger at his hearth, and all his
house—

Mary. His children and his concubine,
belike.

Thirlby. To do him any wrong was
to beget

A kindness from him, for his heart was rich,
Of such fine mould, that if you sow'd
therein

The seed of Hate, it blossom'd Charity.

Pole. 'After his kind it costs him
nothing,' there's

An old world English adage to the point.
These are but natural graces, my good
Bishop,

Which in the Catholic garden are as
flowers,

But on the heretic dunghill only weeds.

Howard. Such weeds make dunghills
gracious.

Mary. Enough, my Lords.

It is God's will, the Holy Father's will,
And Philip's will, and mine, that he
should burn.

He is pronounced anathema.

Howard. Farewell, Madam,
God grant you ampler mercy at your call
Than you have shown to Cranmer.

[*Exeunt* Lords,

Pole. After this,
Your Grace will hardly care to overlook
This same petition of the foreign exiles
For Cranmer's life.

Mary. Make out the writ to-night.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—OXFORD. CRANMER IN PRISON

Cranmer. Last night, I dream'd the
faggots were alight,
And that myself was fasten'd to the stake,
And found it all a visionary flame,
Cool as the light in old decaying wood ;
And then King Harry look'd from out a
cloud,
And bad me have good courage ; and I
heard
An angel cry 'There is more joy in
Heaven,'—
And after that, the trumpet of the dead.
[*Trumpets without.*

Why, there are trumpets blowing now :
what is it ?

Enter FATHER COLE

Cole. Cranmer, I come to question
you again ;

Have you remain'd in the true Catholic
faith

I left you in ?

Cranmer. In the true Catholic faith,
By Heaven's grace, I am more and more
confirm'd.

Why are the trumpets blowing, Father
Cole ?

Cole. Cranmer, it is decided by the
Council

That you to-day should read your recant-
ation

Before the people in St. Mary's Church.
And there be many heretics in the
town,

Who loathe you for your late return to
Rome,

And might assail you passing through the
street,

And tear you piecemeal : so you have a
guard.

Cranmer. Or seek to rescue me. I
thank the Council.

Cole. Do you lack any money ?

Cranmer. Nay, why should I ?

The prison fare is good enough for me.

Cole. Ay, but to give the poor.

Cranmer. Hand it me, then !

I thank you.

Cole. For a little space, farewell ;
Until I see you in St. Mary's Church.

[*Exit* Cole.

Cranmer. It is against all precedent
to burn

One who recants ; they mean to pardon
me.

To give the poor—they give the poor
who die.

Well, burn me or not burn me I am
fixt ;

It is but a communion, not a mass :

A holy supper, not a sacrifice ;

No man can make his Maker—Villa
Garcia.

Enter VILLA GARCIA

Villa Garcia. Pray you write out this paper for me, Cranmer.

Cranmer. Have I not writ enough to satisfy you?

Villa Garcia. It is the last.

Cranmer. Give it me, then.

[*He writes.*

Villa Garcia. Now sign.

Cranmer. I have sign'd enough, and I will sign no more.

Villa Garcia. It is no more than what you have sign'd already,

The public form thereof.

Cranmer. It may be so ; I sign it with my presence, if I read it.

Villa Garcia. But this is idle of you.

Well, sir, well,

You are to beg the people to pray for you ; Exhort them to a pure and virtuous life ; Declare the Queen's right to the throne ; confess

Your faith before all hearers ; and retract That Eucharistic doctrine in your book.

Will you not sign it now ?

Cranmer. No, *Villa Garcia*, I sign no more. Will they have mercy on me ?

Villa Garcia. Have you good hopes of mercy ! So, farewell. [*Exit.*

Cranmer. Good hopes, not theirs, have I that I am fixt,

Fixt beyond fall ; however, in strange hours,

After the long brain-dazing colloquies,
And thousand-times recurring argument
Of those two friars ever in my prison,
When left alone in my despondency,
Without a friend, a book, my faith would seem

Dead or half-drown'd, or else swam heavily

Against the huge corruptions of the Church,

Monsters of mistradition, old enough
To scare me into dreaming, 'what am I,
Cranmer, against whole ages?' was it so,
Or am I slandering my most inward friend,
To veil the fault of my most outward foe—

The soft and tremulous coward in the flesh ?
O higher, holier, earlier, purer church,
I have found thee and not leave thee any more.

It is but a communion, not a mass—

No sacrifice, but a life-giving feast !

(*Writes.*) So, so ; this will I say—thus will I pray. [*Puts up the paper.*

Enter BONNER

Bonner. Good day, old friend ; what, you look somewhat worn ;

And yet it is a day to test your health
Ev'n at the best : I scarce have spoken with you

Since when?—your degradation. At your trial

Never stood up a bolder man than you ;
You would not cap the Pope's commissioner—

Your learning, and your stoutness, and your heresy,

Dumbfounded half of us. So, after that,
We had to dis-archbishop and unlord,
And make you simple *Cranmer* once again.

The common barber clipt your hair, and I
Scraped from your finger-points the holy oil ;

And worse than all, you had to kneel to me ;

Which was not pleasant for you, Master *Cranmer*.

Now you, that would not recognise the Pope,

And you, that would not own the Real Presence,

Have found a real presence in the stake,
Which frights you back into the ancient faith ;

And so you have recanted to the Pope.

How are the mighty fallen, Master *Cranmer* !

Cranmer. You have been more fierce against the Pope than I ;

But why fling back the stone he strikes me with ? [*Aside.*

O *Bonner*, if I ever did you kindness—
Power hath been given you to try faith by fire—

Pray you, remembering how yourself have changed,

Be somewhat pitiful, after I have gone,
To the poor flock—to women and to children—

That when I was archbishop held with me.

Bonner. Ay—gentle as they call you
—live or die!

Pitiful to this pitiful heresy?

I must obey the Queen and Council, man.

Win thro' this day with honour to yourself,

And I'll say something for you—so—
good-bye. *[Exit.*

Cranmer. This hard coarse man of old
hath crouch'd to me

Till I myself was half ashamed for him.

Enter THIRLBY

Weep not, good Thirlby.

Thirlby. Oh, my Lord, my Lord!
My heart is no such block as Bonner's is:
Who would not weep?

Cranmer. Why do you so my-lord me,
Who am disgraced?

Thirlby. On earth; but saved in
heaven

By your recanting.

Cranmer. Will they burn me,
Thirlby?

Thirlby. Alas, they will; these burn-
ings will not help

The purpose of the faith; but my poor
voice

Against them is a whisper to the roar
Of a spring-tide.

Cranmer. And they will surely
burn me?

Thirlby. Ay; and besides, will have
you in the church

Repeat your recantation in the ears
Of all men, to the saving of their souls,
Before your execution. May God help you
Thro' that hard hour!

Cranmer. And may God bless you,
Thirlby!

Well, they shall hear my recantation there.
[Exit Thirlby.

Disgraced, dishonour'd!—not by them,
indeed,

By mine own self—by mine own
hand!

O thin-skinn'd hand and jutting veins,
'twas you

That sign'd the burning of poor Joan of
Kent;

But then she was a witch. You have
written much,

But you were never raised to plead for
Frith,

Whose dogmas I have reach'd: he was
deliver'd

To the secular arm to burn; and there
was Lambert;

Who can foresee himself? truly these
burnings,

As Thirlby says, are profitless to the
burners,

And help the other side. You shall burn
too,

Burn first when I am burnt.

Fire—inch by inch to die in agony!
Latimer

Had a brief end—not Ridley. Hooper
burn'd

Three-quarters of an hour. Will my
faggots

Be wet as his were? It is a day of rain.
I will not muse upon it.

My fancy takes the burner's part, and
makes

The fire seem even crueller than it is.

No, I not doubt that God will give me
strength,

Albeit I have denied him.

Enter SOTO and VILLA GARCIA

Villa Garcia. We are ready

To take you to St. Mary's, Master
Cranmer.

Cranmer. And I: lead on; ye loose
me from my bonds. *[Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—ST. MARY'S CHURCH

COLE *in the Pulpit*, LORD WILLIAMS
OF THAME *presiding*. LORD WILLIAM
HOWARD, LORD PAGET, *and others*.
CRANMER *enters between SOTO and*

VILLA GARCIA, *and the whole Choir strike up 'Nunc Dimittis.'* CRANMER *is set upon a Scaffold before the people.*

Cole. Behold him—

[*A pause: people in the foreground.*]

People. Oh, unhappy sight!

First Protestant. See how the tears run down his fatherly face.

Second Protestant. James, didst thou ever see a carrion crow

Stand watching a sick beast before he dies?

First Protestant. Him perch'd up there? I wish some thunderbolt Would make this Cole a cinder, pulpit and all.

Cole. Behold him, brethren: he hath cause to weep!—

So have we all: weep with him if ye will, Yet—

It is expedient for one man to die,

Yea, for the people, lest the people die.

Yet wherefore should he die that hath return'd

To the one Catholic Universal Church, Repentant of his errors?

Protestant murmurs. Ay, tell us that.

Cole. Those of the wrong side will despise the man,

Deeming him one that thro' the fear of death

Gave up his cause, except he seal his faith In sight of all with flaming martyrdom.

Cranmer. Ay.

Cole. Ye hear him, and albeit there may seem

According to the canons pardon due

To him that so repents, yet are there causes

Wherefore our Queen and Council at this time

Adjudge him to the death. He hath been a traitor,

A shaker and confounder of the realm;

And when the King's divorce was sued at Rome,

He here, this heretic metropolitan,

As if he had been the Holy Father, sat

And judged it. Did I call him heretic?

A huge heresiarch! never was it known That any man so writing, preaching so, So poisoning the Church, so long continuing,

Hath found his pardon; therefore he must die,

For warning and example.

Other reasons

There be for this man's ending, which our Queen

And Council at this present deem it not Expedient to be known.

Protestant murmurs. I warrant you.

Cole. Take therefore, all, example by this man,

For if our Holy Queen not pardon him, Much less shall others in like cause escape,

That all of you, the highest as the lowest,

May learn there is no power against the Lord.

There stands a man, once of so high degree,

Chief prelate of our Church, archbishop, first

In Council, second person in the realm, Friend for so long time of a mighty King:

And now ye see downfallen and debased From councillor to caitiff—fallen so low,

The leprous flutterings of the byway, scum And offal of the city would not change

Estates with him; in brief, so miserable, There is no hope of better left for him,

No place for worse.

Yet, Cranmer, be thou glad.

This is the work of God. He is glorified In thy conversion: lo! thou art reclaim'd;

He brings thee home: nor fear but that to-day

Thou shalt receive the penitent thief's award,

And be with Christ the Lord in Paradise. Remember how God made the fierce fire

seem

To those three children like a pleasant dew.

Remember, too,

The triumph of St. Andrew on his cross,

The patience of St. Lawrence in the fire.

Thus, if thou call on God and all the saints,

God will beat down the fury of the flame,
Or give thee saintly strength to undergo.
And for thy soul shall masses here be sung
By every priest in Oxford. Pray for him.

Cranmer. Ay, one and all, dear brothers, pray for me ;
Pray with one breath, one heart, one soul for me.

Cole. And now, lest anyone among you doubt

The man's conversion and remorse of heart,

Yourselves shall hear him speak. Speak, Master Cranmer,

Fulfil your promise made me, and proclaim

Your true undoubted faith, that all may hear.

Cranmer. And that I will. O God, Father of Heaven !

O Son of God, Redeemer of the world !

O Holy Ghost ! proceeding from them both,

Three persons and one God, have mercy on me,

Most miserable sinner, wretched man.

I have offended against heaven and earth

More grievously than any tongue can tell.

Then whither should I flee for any help ?

I am ashamed to lift my eyes to heaven,

And I can find no refuge upon earth.

Shall I despair then ?—God forbid ! O God,

For thou art merciful, refusing none

That come to Thee for succour, unto Thee,

Therefore, I come ; humble myself to Thee ;

Saying, O Lord God, although my sins be great,

For thy great mercy have mercy ! O God the Son,

Not for slight faults alone, when thou becamest

Man in the Flesh, was the great mystery wrought ;

O God the Father, not for little sins

Didst thou yield up thy Son to human death ;

But for the greatest sin that can be sinn'd,
Yea, even such as mine, incalculable,
Unpardonable,—sin against the light,
The truth of God, which I had proven and known.

Thy mercy must be greater than all sin.
Forgive me, Father, for no merit of mine,
But that Thy name by man be glorified,
And Thy most blessed Son's, who died for man.

Good people, every man at time of death

Would fain set forth some saying that may live

After his death and better humankind ;

For death gives life's last word a power to live,

And, like the stone-cut epitaph, remain

After the vanish'd voice, and speak to men.

God grant me grace to glorify my God !

And first I say it is a grievous case,

Many so dote upon this bubble world,

Whose colours in a moment break and fly,

They care for nothing else. What saith St. John :—

'Love of this world is hatred against God.'

Again, I pray you all that, next to God,

You do unurmuringly and willingly

Obeys your King and Queen, and not for dread

Of these alone, but from the fear of Him

Whose ministers they be to govern you.

Thirdly, I pray you all to live together

Like brethren ; yet what hatred Christian men

Bear to each other, seeming not as brethren,

But mortal foes ! But do you good to all

As much as in you lieth. Hurt no man more

Than you would harm your loving natural brother

Of the same roof, same breast. If any do,

Albeit he think himself at home with God,

Of this be sure, he is whole worlds away.

Protestant murmurs. What sort of brothers then be those that lust To burn each other?

Williams. Peace among you, there!

Cranmer. Fourthly, to those that own exceeding wealth,

Remember that sore saying spoken once By Him that was the truth, 'How hard it is

For the rich man to enter into Heaven'; Let all rich men remember that hard word.

I have not time for more: if ever, now Let them flow forth in charity, seeing now The poor so many, and all food so dear. Long have I lain in prison, yet have heard

Of all their wretchedness. Give to the poor,

Ye give to God. He is with us in the poor.

And now, and forasmuch as I have come

To the last end of life, and thereupon Hangs all my past, and all my life to be, Either to live with Christ in Heaven with joy,

Or to be still in pain with devils in hell; And, seeing in a moment, I shall find

[*Pointing upwards.*

Heaven or else hell ready to swallow me,

[*Pointing downwards.*

I shall declare to you my very faith Without all colour.

Cole. Hear him, my good brethren.

Cranmer. I do believe in God, Father of all;

In every article of the Catholic faith, And every syllable taught us by our Lord, His prophets, and apostles, in the Testaments,

Both Old and New.

Cole. Be plainer, Master Cranmer.

Cranmer. And now I come to the great cause that weighs

Upon my conscience more than anything Or said or done in all my life by me;

For there be writings I have set abroad Against the truth I knew within my heart, Written for fear of death, to save my life, If that might be; the papers by my hand

Sign'd since my degradation—by this hand
[*Holding out his right hand.*

Written and sign'd—I here renounce them all;

And, since my hand offended, having written

Against my heart, my hand shall first be burnt,

So I may come to the fire.

[*Dead silence.*

Protestant murmurs.

First Protestant. I knew it would be so.

Second Protestant. Our prayers are heard!

Third Protestant. God bless him!

Catholic murmurs. Out upon him! out upon him!

Liar! dissembler! traitor! to the fire!

Williams (raising his voice). You know that you recanted all you said

Touching the sacrament in that same book

You wrote against my Lord of Winchester;

Dissemble not; play the plain Christian man.

Cranmer. Alas, my Lord, I have been a man loved plainness all my life;

I *did* dissemble, but the hour has come For utter truth and plainness; wherefore, I say,

I hold by all I wrote within that book. Moreover,

As for the Pope I count him Antichrist, With all his devil's doctrines; and refuse, Reject him, and abhor him. I have said.

[*Cries on all sides, 'Pull him down! Away with him!'*

Cole. Ay, stop the heretic's mouth! Hale him away!

Williams. Harm him not, harm him not! have him to the fire!

[*CRANMER goes out between Two Friars, smiling; hands are reached to him from the crowd.* LORD WILLIAM HOWARD and LORD PAGET are left alone in the church.

Paget. The nave and aisles all empty
as a fool's jest !

No, here's Lord William Howard.

What, my Lord,

You have not gone to see the burning ?

Howard. Fie !

To stand at ease, and stare as at a show,
And watch a good man burn. Never
again.

I saw the deaths of Latimer and Ridley.
Moreover, tho' a Catholic, I would not,
For the pure honour of our common
nature,

Hear what I might—another recantation
Of Cranmer at the stake.

Paget. You'd not hear that.
He pass'd out smiling, and he walk'd
upright ;

His eye was like a soldier's, whom the
general

He looks to and he leans on as his God,
Hath rated for some backwardness and
bidd'n him

Charge one against a thousand, and the
man

Hurls his soil'd life against the pikes and
dies.

Howard. Yet that he might not after
all those papers

Of recantation yield again, who knows ?

Paget. Papers of recantation ! Think
you then

That Cranmer read all papers that he
sign'd ?

Or sign'd all those they tell us that he
sign'd ?

Nay, I trow not : and you shall see, my
Lord,

That howsoever hero-like the man
Dies in the fire, this Bonner or another
Will in some lying fashion misreport
His ending to the glory of their church.
And you saw Latimer and Ridley die ?
Latimer was eighty, was he not ? his best
Of life was over then.

Howard. His eighty years
Look'd somewhat crooked on him in his
frieze ;

But after they had stript him to his shroud,
He stood upright, a lad of twenty-one,

And gather'd with his hands the starting
flame,

And wash'd his hands and all his face
therein,

Until the powder suddenly blew him
dead.

Ridley was longer burning ; but he died
As manfully and boldly, and, 'fore God,
I know them heretics, but right English
ones.

If ever, as heaven grant, we clash with
Spain,

Our Ridley-soldiers and our Latimer-
sailors

Will teach her something.

Paget. Your mild Legate Pole
Will tell you that the devil helpt them
thro' it.

[*A murmur of the Crowd in the
distance.*]

Hark, how those Roman wolfdogs howl
and bay him !

Howard. Might it not be the other
side rejoicing

In his brave end ?

Paget. They are too crush'd, too
broken,

They can but weep in silence.

Howard. Ay, ay, Paget,
They have brought it in large measure on
themselves.

Have I not heard them mock the blessed
Host

In songs so lewd, the beast might roar
his claim

To being in God's image, more than
they ?

Have I not seen the gamekeeper, the
groom,

Gardener, and huntsman, in the parson's
place,

The parson from his own spire swung out
dead,

And Ignorance crying in the streets, and
all men

Regarding her ? I say they have drawn
the fire

On their own heads : yet, Paget, I do hold
The Catholic, if he have the greater right,
Hath been the crueller.

Paget. Action and re-action,
The miserable see-saw of our child-world,
Make us despise it at odd hours, my
Lord,

Heaven help that this re-action not re-act
Yet fiercelier under Queen Elizabeth,
So that she come to rule us.

Howard. The world's mad.

Paget. My Lord, the world is like a
drunken man,

Who cannot move straight to his end—
but reels

Now to the right, then as far to the left,
Push'd by the crowd beside—and under-
foot

An earthquake; for since Henry for a
doubt—

Which a young lust had clapt upon the
back,

Crying, 'Forward!'—set our old church
rocking, men

Have hardly known what to believe, or
whether

They should believe in anything; the
currents

So shift and change, they see not how
they are borne,

Nor whither. I conclude the King a
beast;

Verily a lion if you will—the world

A most obedient beast and fool—myself
Half beast and fool as appertaining to it;

Altho' your Lordship hath as little of
each

Cleaving to your original Adam-clay,

As may be consonant with mortality.

Howard. We talk and Cranmer suffers.

The kindest man I ever knew; see, see,
I speak of him in the past. Unhappy

land!

Hard-natured Queen, half-Spanish in
herself,

And grafted on the hard-grain'd stock of
Spain—

Her life, since Philip left her, and she lost
Her fierce desire of bearing him a child,

Hath, like a brief and bitter winter's day,
Gone narrowing down and darkening to

a close.

There will be more conspiracies, I fear.

Paget. Ay, ay, beware of France.

Howard. O Paget, Paget!

I have seen heretics of the poorer sort,
Expectant of the rack from day to day,
To whom the fire were welcome, lying
chain'd

In breathless dungeons over steaming
sewers,

Fed with rank bread that crawl'd upon
the tongue,

And putrid water, every drop a worm,
Until they died of rotted limbs; and then

Cast on the dunghill naked, and become
Hideously alive again from head to heel,

Made even the carrion-nosing mongrel
vomit

With hate and horror.

Paget. Nay, you sicken *me*
To hear you.

Howard. Fancy-sick; these things
are done,

Done right against the promise of this
Queen

Twice given.

Paget. No faith with heretics, my
Lord!

Hist! there be two old gossips—gospel-
lers,

I take it; stand behind the pillar here;
I warrant you they talk about the burning.

Enter TWO OLD WOMEN. JOAN, and
after her TIB

Joan. Why, it be Tib!

Tib. I cum behind tha, gall, and
couldn't make tha hear. Eh, the wind
and the wet! What a day, what a day!
nigh upo' judgement daay loike. Pwoaps
be pretty things, Joan, but they wunt
set i' the Lord's cheer o' that daay.

Joan. I must set down myself, Tib;
it be a var waay vor my owld legs up
vro' Islip. Eh, my rheumatizy be that
bad howiver be I to win to the burnin'.

Tib. I should saay 'twuower by now.
I'd ha' been here avore, but Dumble wur
blow'd wi' the wind, and Dumble's the
best milcher in Islip.

Joan. Our Daisy's as good 'z her.

Tib. Noa, Joan.

Joan. Our Daisy's butter's as good 'z hern.

Tib. Noa, Joan.

Joan. Our Daisy's cheeses be better.

Tib. Noa, Joan.

Joan. Eh, then ha' thy waay wi' me, Tib; ez thou hast wi' thy owld man.

Tib. Ay, Joan, and my owld man wur up and awaay betimes wi' dree hard eggs for a good plect at the burnin'; and barrin' the wet, Hodge 'ud ha' been a-harrowin' o' white peasen i' the outfield—and barrin' the wind, Dumble wur blow'd wi' the wind, so 'z we was forced to stick her, but we fetched her round at last. Thank the Lord therevore. Dumble's the best milcher in Islip.

Joan. Thou's thy way wi' man and beast, Tib. I wonder at tha, it beats me! Eh, but I do know ez Pwoaps and vires be bad things; tell 'ee now, I heerd summ at as summun towld summun o' owld Bishop Gardiner's end; there wur an owld lord a-cum to dine wi' un, and a wur so owld a couldn't bide vor his dinner, but a had to bide howsomiver, vor 'I wunt dine,' says my Lord Bishop, says he, 'not till I hears ez Latimer and Ridley be a-vire'; and so they bided on and on till vour o' the clock, till his man cum in post vro' here, and tells un ez the vire has tuk holt. 'Now,' says the Bishop, says he, 'we'll gwo to dinner'; and the owld lord fell to 's meat wi' a will, God bless un! but Gardiner wur struck down like by the hand o' God avore a could taste a mossel, and a set un all a-vire, so 'z the tongue on un cum a-lolluping out o' 'is mouth as black as a rat. Thank the Lord, therevore.

Paget. The fools!

Tib. Ay, Joan; and Queen Mary gwoes on a-burnin' and a-burnin', to get her baaby born; but all her burnin's 'ill never burn out the hypocrisy that makes the water in her. There's nought but the vire of God's hell ez can burn out that.

Joan. Thank the Lord, 'therevore.

Paget. The fools!

Tib. A-burnin', and a-burnin', and a-makin' o' volk madder and madder; but tek thou my word vor't, Joan,—and I bean't wrong not twice i' ten year—the burnin' o' the owld archbishop 'll burn the Pwoap out o' this 'ere land vor iver and iver.

Howard. Out of the church, you brace of cursed crones,
Or I will have you duck'd! (*Women hurry out.*) Said I not right?

For how should reverend prelate or throned prince

Brook for an hour such brute malignity?

Ah, whatan acrid wine has Luther brew'd!

Paget. Pooh, pooh, my Lord! poor garrulous country-wives.

Buy you their cheeses, and they'll side with you;

You cannot judge the liquor from the lees.

Howard. I think that in some sort we may. But see,

Enter PETERS

Peters, my gentleman, an honest Catholic, Who follow'd with the crowd to Cranmer's fire.

One that would neither misreport nor lie, Not to gain paradise: no, nor if the Pope, Charged him to do it—he is white as death.

Peters, how pale you look! you bring the smoke

Of Cranmer's burning with you.

Peters. Twice or thrice
The smoke of Cranmer's burning wrapt me round.

Howard. Peters, you know me Catholic, but English.

Did he die bravely? Tell me that, or leave All else untold.

Peters. My Lord, he died most bravely.

Howard. Then tell me all.

Paget. Ay, Master Peters, tell us.

Peters. You saw him how he past among the crowd;

And ever as he walk'd the Spanish friars Still plied him with entreaty and reproach: But Cranmer, as the helmsman at the helm

Steers, ever looking to the happy haven
 Where he shall rest at night, moved to
 his death ;
 And I could see that many silent hands
 Came from the crowd and met his own ;
 and thus,
 When we had come where Ridley burnt
 with Latimer,
 He, with a cheerful smile, as one whose
 mind
 Is all made up, in haste put off the rags
 They had mock'd his misery with, and all
 in white,
 His long white beard, which he had never
 shaven
 Since Henry's death, down-sweeping to
 the chain,
 Wherewith they bound him to the stake,
 he stood
 More like an ancient father of the Church,
 Than heretic of these times ; and still
 the friars
 Plied him, but Cranmer only shook his
 head,
 Or answer'd them in smiling negatives ;
 Whereat Lord Williams gave a sudden
 cry :—
 ' Make short ! make short ! ' and so they
 lit the wood.
 Then Cranmer lifted his left hand to
 heaven,
 And thrust his right into the bitter flame ;
 And crying, in his deep voice, more than
 once,
 ' This hath offended — this unworthy
 hand ! '
 So held it till it all was burn'd, before
 The flame had reach'd his body ; I stood
 near—
 Mark'd him—he never uttered moan of
 pain :
 He never stirr'd or writhed, but, like a
 statue,
 Unmoving in the greatness of the flame,
 Gave up the ghost ; and so past martyr-
 like—
 Martyr I may not call him—past—but
 whither ?
Paget. To purgatory, man, to purga-
 tory.

Peters. Nay, but, my Lord, he denied
 purgatory.
Paget. Why then to heaven, and God
 ha' mercy on him.
Howard. Paget, despite his fearful
 heresies,
 I loved the man, and needs must moan
 for him ;
 O Cranmer !
Paget. But your moan is useless now :
 Come out, my Lord, it is a world of fools.
 [*Exeunt.*]

ACT V

SCENE I.—LONDON. HALL IN THE
PALACE

QUEEN, SIR NICHOLAS HEATH

Heath. Madam,
 I do assure you, that it must be look'd
 to :
 Calais is but ill-garrison'd, in Guisnes
 Are scarce two hundred men, and the
 French fleet
 Rule in the narrow seas. It must be
 look'd to,
 If war should fall between yourself and
 France ;
 Or you will lose your Calais.
Mary. It shall be look'd to ;
 I wish you a good morning, good Sir
 Nicholas :
 Here is the King. [Exit Heath.]

Enter PHILIP

Philip. Sir Nicholas tells you true,
 And you must look to Calais when I go.
Mary. Go ? must you go, indeed—
 again—so soon ?
 Why, nature's licensed vagabond, the
 swallow,
 That might live always in the sun's warm
 heart,
 Stays longer here in our poor north than
 you :—
 Knows where he nested—ever comes
 again.
Philip. And, Madam, so shall I.

Mary. O, will you? will you?
I am faint with fear that you will come
no more.

Philip. Ay, ay; but many voices call
me hence.

Mary. Voices—I hear unhappy rum-
mours—nay,
I say not, I believe. What voices call
you
Dearer than mine that should be dearest
to you?

Alas, my Lord! what voices and how
many?

Philip. The voices of Castile and
Aragon,
Granada, Naples, Sicily, and Milan,—
The voices of Franche-Comté, and the
Netherlands,
The voices of Peru and Mexico,
Tunis, and Oran, and the Philippines,
And all the fair spice-islands of the
East.

Mary (*admiringly*). You are the
mightiest monarch upon earth,
I but a little Queen: and, so indeed,
Need you the more.

Philip. A little Queen! but when
I came to wed your majesty, Lord Howard,
Sending an insolent shot that dash'd the
seas

Upon us, made us lower our kingly flag
To yours of England.

Mary. Howard is all English!
There is no king, not were he ten times
king,

Ten times our husband, but must lower
his flag

To that of England in the seas of
England.

Philip. Is that your answer?

Mary. Being Queen of England,
I have none other.

Philip. So.

Mary. But wherefore not
Helm the huge vessel of your state, my
liege,
Here by the side of her who loves you
most?

Philip. No, Madam, no! a candle in
the sun

Is all but smoke—a star beside the
moon

Is all but lost; your people will not crown
me—

Your people are as cheerless as your
clime;

Hate me and mine: witness the brawls,
the gibbets.

Here swings a Spaniard—there an Eng-
lishman;

The peoples are unlike as their com-
plexion;

Yet will I be your swallow and re-
turn—

But now I cannot bide.

Mary. Not to help *me*?
They hate *me* also for my love to you,
My Philip; and these judgments on the
land—

Harvestless autumns, horrible agues,
plague—

Philip. The blood and sweat of
heretics at the stake

Is God's best dew upon the barren field.
Burn more!

Mary. I will, I will; and you will
stay?

Philip. Have I not said? Madam, I
came to sue

Your Council and yourself to declare
war.

Mary. Sir, there are many English in
your ranks

To help your battle.

Philip. So far, good. I say
I came to sue your Council and your-
self

To declare war against the King of
France.

Mary. Not to see me?

Philip. Ay, Madam, to see you.
Unalterably and pesteringly fond! [*Aside.*

But, soon or late you must have war with
France;

King Henry warms your traitors at his
hearth.

Carew is there, and Thomas Stafford
there.

Courtenay, belike—

Mary. A fool and featherhead!

Philip. Ay, but they use his name.
In brief, this Henry
Stirs up your land against you to the
intent

That you may lose your English heritage.
And then, your Scottish namesake marry-
ing

The Dauphin, he would weld France,
England, Scotland,
Into one sword to hack at Spain and me.

Mary. And yet the Pope is now
colleagued with France ;

You make your wars upon him down in
Italy :—

Philip. can that be well ?

Philip. Content you, Madam ;
You must abide my judgment, and my
father's,

Who deems it a most just and holy war.
The Pope would cast the Spaniard out of
Naples :

He calls us worse than Jews, Moors,
Saracens.

The Pope has pushed his horns beyond
his mitre—

Beyond his province. Now,

Duke Alva will but touch him on the
horns,

And he withdraws ; and of his holy
head—

For Alva is true son of the true
church—

No hair is harm'd. Will you not help
me here ?

Mary. Alas ! the Council will not
hear of war.

They say your wars are not the wars of
England.

They will not lay more taxes on a land
So hunger-nipt and wretched ; and you
know

The crown is poor. We have given the
church-lands back :

The nobles would not ; nay, they clapt
their hands

Upon their swords when ask'd ; and
therefore God

Is hard upon the people. What's to be
done ?

Sir, I will move them in your cause again,

And we will raise us loans and subsidies
Among the merchants ; and Sir Thomas
Gresham

Will aid us. There is Antwerp and the
Jews.

Philip. Madam, my thanks.

Mary. And you will stay your
going ?

Philip. And further to discourage and
lay lame

The plots of France, altho' you love her
not,

You must proclaim Elizabeth your heir.
She stands between you and the Queen
of Scots.

Mary. The Queen of Scots at least is
Catholic.

Philip. Ay, Madam, Catholic ; but
I will not have

The King of France the King of England
too.

Mary. But she's a heretic, and, when
I am gone,

Brings the new learning back.

Philip. It must be done,
You must proclaim Elizabeth your heir.

Mary. Then it is done ; but you will
stay your going

Somewhat beyond your settled purpose ?
Philip. No !

Mary. What, not one day ?

Philip. You beat upon the rock.

Mary. And I am broken there.

Philip. Is this a place

To wail in, Madam ? what ! a public hall.

Go in, I pray you.

Mary. Do not seem so changed.

Say go ; but only say it lovingly.

Philip. You do mistake. I am not
one to change.

I never loved you more.

Mary. Sire, I obey you.

Come quickly.

Philip. Ay. [*Exit Mary.*]

Enter COUNT DE FERIA

Feria (aside). The Queen in tears !

Philip. Feria !

Hast thou not mark'd—come closer to
mine ear—

How doubly aged this Queen of ours hath
grown
Since she lost hope of bearing us a
child?

Feria. Sire, if your Grace hath mark'd
it, so have I.

Philip. Hast thou not likewise mark'd
Elizabeth,

How fair and royal—like a Queen, in-
deed?

Feria. Allow me the same answer as
before—

That if your Grace hath mark'd her, so
have I.

Philip. Good, now; methinks my
Queen is like enough

To leave me by and by.

Feria. To leave you, sire?

Philip. I mean not like to, live.
Elizabeth—

To Philibert of Savoy, as you know,
We meant to wed her; but I am not
sure

She will not serve me better—so my
Queen

Would leave me—as—my wife.

Feria. Sire, even so.

Philip. She will not have Prince
Philibert of Savoy.

Feria. No, sire.

Philip. I have to pray you, some
odd time,

To sound the Princess carelessly on this;
Not as from me, but as your phantasy;
And tell me how she takes it.

Feria. Sire, I will.

Philip. I am not certain but that
Philibert

Shall be the man; and I shall urge his
suit

Upon the Queen, because I am not
certain:

You understand, *Feria*.

Feria. Sire, I do.

Philip. And if you be not secret in
this matter,

You understand me there, too?

Feria. Sire, I do.

Philip. You must besweet and supple,
like a Frenchman.

She is none of those who loathe the
honeycomb. [*Exit Feria.*]

Enter RENARD

Renard. My liege, I bring you goodly
tidings.

Philip. Well?

Renard. There *will* be war with
France, at last, my liege;
Sir Thomas Stafford, a bull-headed ass,
Sailing from France, with thirty English-
men,
Hath taken Scarboro' Castle, north of
York;

Proclaims himself protector, and affirms
The Queen has forfeited her right to reign
By marriage with an alien—other things
As idle; a weak Wyatt! Little doubt
This buzz will soon be silenced; but the
Council

(I have talk'd with some already) are for
war.

This is the fifth conspiracy hatch'd in
France;

They show their teeth upon it; and your
Grace,

So you will take advice of mine, should
stay

Yet for awhile, to shape and guide the
event.

Philip. Good! *Renard*, I will stay then.

Renard. Also, sire,
Might I not say—to please your wife, the
Queen?

Philip. Ay, *Renard*, if you care to put
it so. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—A ROOM IN THE PALACE

MARY, *sitting: a rose in her hand.* LADY
CLARENCE. ALICE *in the background.*

Mary. Look! I have play'd with this
poor rose so long
I have broken off the head.

Lady Clarence. Your Grace hath been
More merciful to many a rebel head
That should have fallen, and may rise
again.

Mary. There were not many hang'd
for Wyatt's rising.

Lady Clarence. Nay, not two hundred.

Mary. I could weep for them
And her, and mine own self and all the
world.

Lady Clarence. For her? for whom,
your Grace?

Enter USHER

Usher. The Cardinal.

Enter CARDINAL POLE. (MARY rises.)

Mary. Reginald Pole, what news hath
plagued thy heart?

What makes thy favour like the bloodless
head

Fall'n on the block, and held up by the
hair?

Philip?—

Pole. No, Philip is as warm in life
As ever.

Mary. Ay, and then as cold as ever.
Is Calais taken?

Pole. Cousin, there hath chanced
A sharper harm to England and to Rome,
Than Calais taken. Julius the Third
Was ever just, and mild, and father-like;
But this new Pope Caraffa, Paul the
Fourth,

Not only reft me of that legateship
Which Julius gave me, and the legate-
ship

Annex'd to Canterbury—nay, but worse—
And yet I must obey the Holy Father,
And so must you, good cousin;—worse
than all,

A passing bell toll'd in a dying ear—
He hath cited me to Rome, for heresy,
Before his Inquisition.

Mary. I knew it, cousin,
But held from you all papers sent by
Rome,

That you might rest among us, till the
Pope,

To compass which I wrote myself to
Rome,

Reversed his doom, and that you might
not seem

To disobey his Holiness.

Pole. He hates Philip;
He is all Italian, and he hates the
Spaniard;

He cannot dream that I advised the war;
He strikes thro' me at Philip and your-
self.

Nay, but I know it of old, he hates me
too;

So brands me in the stare of Christendom
A heretic!

Now, even now, when bow'd before my
time,

The house half-ruin'd ere the lease be out;
When I should guide the Church in peace
at home,

After my twenty years of banishment,
And all my lifelong labour to uphold
The primacy—a heretic. Long ago,
When I was ruler in the patrimony,
I was too lenient to the Lutheran,
And I and learned friends among our-
selves

Would freely canvass certain Lutheran-
isms.

What then, he knew I was no Lutheran.
A heretic!

He drew this shaft against me to the
head,

When it was thought I might be chosen
Pope,

But then withdrew it. In full consistory,
When I was made Archbishop, he
approved me.

And how should he have sent me Legate
hither,

Deeming me heretic? and what heresy
since?

But he was evermore mine enemy,
And hates the Spaniard—fiery-choleric,
A drinker of black, strong, volcanic
wines,

That ever make him fierier. I, a heretic?
Your Highness knows that in pursuing
heresy

I have gone beyond your late Lord
Chancellor,—

He cried Enough! enough! before his
death.—

Gone beyond him and mine own natural
man

(It was God's cause); so far they call me now,
The scourge and butcher of their English church.

Mary. Have courage, your reward is Heaven itself.

Pole. They groan amen; they swarm into the fire

Like flies—for what? no dogma. They know nothing;

They burn for nothing.

Mary. You have done your best.

Pole. Have done my best, and as a faithful son,

That all day long hath wrought his father's work,

When back he comes at evening hath the door

Shut on him by the father whom he loved,

His early follies cast into his teeth,

And the poor son turn'd out into the street

To sleep, to die—I shall die of it, cousin.

Mary. I pray you be not so disconsolate;

I still will do mine utmost with the Pope. Poor cousin!

Have not I been the fast friend of your life

Since mine began, and it was thought we two

Might make one flesh, and cleave unto each other

As man and wife?

Pole. Ah, cousin, I remember
How I would dandle you upon my knee

At lisping-age. I watch'd you dancing once

With your huge father; he look'd the Great Harry,

You but his cockboat; prettily you did it,

And innocently. No—we were not made
One flesh in happiness, no happiness here;

But now we are made one flesh in misery;

Our bridemaids are not lovely—Disappointment,
Ingratitude, Injustice, Evil-tongue,
Labour-in-vain.

Mary. Surely, not all in vain.

Peace, cousin, peace! I am sad at heart myself.

Pole. Our altar is a mound of dead men's clay,

Dug from the grave that yawns for us beyond;

And there is one Death stands behind the Groom,

And there is one Death stands behind the Bride—

Mary. Have you been looking at the 'Dance of Death'?

Pole. No; but these libellous papers which I found

Strewn in your palace. Look you here—the Pope

Pointing at me with 'Pole, the heretic, Thou hast burnt others, do thou burn thyself,

Or I will burn thee'; and this other; see!—

'We pray continually for the death
Of our accursed Queen and Cardinal Pole.'

This last—I dare not read it her. [*Aside.*

Mary. Away!

Why do you bring me these?

I thought you knew me better. I never read,

I tear them; they come back upon my dreams.

The hands that write them should be burnt clean off

As Cranmer's, and the fiends that utter them

Tongue-torn with pincers, lash'd to death, or lie

Famishing in black cells, while famish'd rats

Eat them alive. Why do they bring me these?

Do you mean to drive me mad?

Pole. I had forgotten

How these poor libels trouble you. Your pardon,

Sweet cousin, and farewell ! ' O bubble world,
Whose colours in a moment break and fly !'

Why, who said that ? I know not—true enough !

[*Puts up the papers, all but the last, which falls.* Exit Pole.

Alice. If Cranmer's spirit were a mocking one,

And heard these two, there might be sport for him. [*Aside.*

Mary. Clarence, they hate me ; even while I speak

There lurks a silent dagger, listening
In some dark closet, some long gallery,
drawn,

And panting for my blood as I go by.

Lady Clarence. Nay, Madam, there
be loyal papers too,

And I have often found them.

Mary. Find me one !

Lady Clarence. Ay, Madam ; but Sir
Nicholas Heath, the Chancellor,
Would see your Highness.

Mary. Wherefore should I see him ?

Lady Clarence. Well, Madam, he
may bring you news from Philip.

Mary. So, Clarence.

Lady Clarence. Let me first put
up your hair ;

It tumbles all abroad.

Mary. And the gray dawn
Of an old age that never will be mine
Is all the clearer seen. No, no ; what
matters ?

Forlorn I am, and let me look forlorn.

Enter SIR NICHOLAS HEATH

Heath. I bring your Majesty such
grievous news

I grieve to bring it. Madam, Calais is
taken.

Mary. What traitor spoke ? Here,
let my cousin Pole

Seize him and burn him for a Lutheran.

Heath. Her Highness is unwell. I
will retire.

Lady Clarence. Madam, your Chan-
cellor, Sir Nicholas Heath.

Mary. Sir Nicholas ! I am stunn'd
—Nicholas Heath ?

Methought some traitor smote me on the
head.

What said you, my good Lord, that our
brave English

Had sallied out from Calais and driven
back

The Frenchmen from their trenches ?

Heath. Alas ! no.

That gateway to the mainland over which
Our flag hath floated for two hundred
years

Is France again.

Mary. So ; but it is not lost—
Not yet. Send out : let England as of
old

Rise lionlike, strike hard and deep into
The prey they are rending from her—ay,
and rend

The renders too. Send out, send out,
and make

Musters in all the counties ; gather all
From sixteen years to sixty ; collect the
fleet ;

Let every craft that carries sail and gun
Steer toward Calais. Guisnes is not
taken yet ?

Heath. Guisnes is not taken yet.

Mary. There yet is hope.

Heath. Ah, Madam, but your people
are so cold ;

I do much fear that England will not
care.

Methinks there is no manhood left among
us.

Mary. Send out ; I am too weak to
stir abroad :

Tell my mind to the Council—to the
Parliament :

Proclaim it to the winds. Thou art cold
thyself

To babble of their coldness. O would I
were

My father for an hour ! Away now—
Quick ! [*Exit* Heath.

I hoped I had served God with all my
might !

It seems I have not. Ah ! much heresy
Shelter'd in Calais. Saints, I have rebuilt

Your shrines, set up your broken images ;
Be comfortable to me. Suffer not
That my brief reign in England be de-
famed

Thro' all her angry chronicles hereafter
By loss of Calais. Grant me Calais.

Philip,

We have made war upon the Holy
Father

All for your sake : what good could come
of that ?

Lady Clarence. No, Madam, not
against the Holy Father ;
You did but help King Philip's war with
France,

Your troops were never down in Italy.

Mary. I am a byword. Heretic and
rebel

Point at me and make merry. Philip
gone !

And Calais gone ! Time that I were
gone too !

Lady Clarence. Nay, if the fetid gutter
had a voice

And cried I was not clean, what should
I care ?

Or you, for heretic cries ? And I believe,
Spite of your melancholy Sir Nicholas,
Your England is as loyal as myself.

Mary (seeing the paper dropt by Pole).
There ! there ! another paper !
Said you not

Many of these were loyal ? Shall I try
If this be one of such ?

Lady Clarence. Let it be, let it be.
God pardon me ! I have never yet
found one. [*Aside.*]

Mary (reads). ' Your people hate you
as your husband hates you.'

Clarence, Clarence, what have I done ?
what sin

Beyond all grace, all pardon ? Mother
of God,

Thou knowest never woman meant so
well,

And fared so ill in this disastrous world.
My people hate me and desire my death.

Lady Clarence. No, Madam, no.

Mary. My husband hates me, and
desires my death.

Lady Clarence. No, Madam ; these
are libels.

Mary. I hate myself, and I desire my
death.

Lady Clarence. Long live your
Majesty ! Shall Alice sing you
One of her pleasant songs ? Alice, my
child,

Bring us your lute (*Alice goes*). They
say the gloom of Saul

Was lighten'd by young David's harp.

Mary. Too young !
And never knew a Philip.

Re-enter ALICE

Give me the lute.

He hates me !

(*She sings*)

Hapless doom of woman happy in betrothing !
Beauty passes like a breath and love is lost in
loathing :

Low, my lute ; speak low, my lute, but say the
world is nothing—

Low, lute, low !

Love will hover round the flowers when they first
awaken ;

Love will fly the fallen leaf, and not be over-
taken ;

Low, my lute ! oh low, my lute ! we fade and
are forsaken—

Low, dear lute, low !

Take it away ! not low enough for me !

Alice. Your Grace hath a low voice.

Mary. How dare you say it ?
Even for that he hates me. A low
voice

Lost in a wilderness where none can
hear !

A voice of shipwreck on a shoreless sea !
A low voice from the dust and from the
grave

(*Sitting on the ground*). There, am I
low enough now ?

Alice. Good Lord ! how grim and
ghastly looks her Grace,
With both her knees drawn upward to
her chin.

There was an old-world tomb beside my
father's,

And this was open'd, and the dead were found
Sitting, and in this fashion ; she looks a corpse.

Enter LADY MAGDALEN DACRES

Lady Magdalen. Madam, the Count de Feria waits without,
In hopes to see your Highness.

Lady Clarence (pointing to Mary). Wait he must—

Her trance again. She neither sees nor hears,

And may not speak for hours.

Lady Magdalen. Unhappiest Of Queens and wives and women !

Alice (in the foreground with Lady Magdalen). And all along Of Philip.

Lady Magdalen. Not so loud ! Our Clarence there Sees ever such an aureole round the Queen,

It gilds the greatest wronger of her peace,
Who stands the nearest to her.

Alice. Ay, this Philip ; I used to love the Queen with all my heart—

God help me, but methinks I love her less
For such a dotage upon such a man.

I would I were as tall and strong as you.

Lady Magdalen. I seem half-shamed at times to be so tall.

Alice. You are the stateliest deer in all the herd—

Beyond his aim—but I am small and scandalous,

And love to hear bad tales of Philip.

Lady Magdalen. Why ?

I never heard him utter worse of you
Than that you were low-statured.

Alice. Does he think Low stature is low nature, or all women's Low as his own ?

Lady Magdalen. There you strike in the nail.

This coarseness is a want of phantasy.
It is the low man thinks the woman low ;

Sin is too dull to see beyond himself.

Alice. Ah, Magdalen, sin is bold as well as dull.

How dared he ?

Lady Magdalen. Stupid soldiers oft are bold.

Poor lads, they see not what the general sees,

A risk of utter ruin. I am *not*

Beyond his aim, or was not.

Alice. Who ? Not you ?

Tell, tell me ; save my credit with myself.

Lady Magdalen. I never breathed it to a bird in the eaves,

Would not for all the stars and maiden moon

Our drooping Queen should know ! In Hampton Court

My window look'd upon the corridor ;

And I was robing ;—this poor throat of mine,

Barer than I should wish a man to see it,—

When he we speak of drove the window back,

And, like a thief, push'd in his royal hand ;

But by God's providence a good stout staff Lay near me ; and you know me strong of arm ;

I do believe I lamed his Majesty's For a day or two, tho', give the Devil his due,

I never found he bore me any spite.

Alice. I would she could have wedded that poor youth,

My Lord of Devon—light enough, God knows,

And mixt with Wyatt's rising—and the boy

Not out of him—but neither cold, coarse, cruel,

And more than all—no Spaniard.

Lady Clarence. Not so loud.

Lord Devon, girls ! what are you whispering here ?

Alice. Probing an old state-secret—how it chanced

That this young Earl was sent on foreign travel,

Not lost his head.

Lady Clarence. There was no proof against him.

Alice. Nay, Madam; did not Gardiner intercept

A letter which the Count de Noailles wrote

To that dead traitor Wyatt, with full proof Of Courtenay's treason? What became of that?

Lady Clarence. Some say that Gardiner, out of love for him, Burnt it, and some relate that it was lost When Wyatt sack'd the Chancellor's house in Southwark.

Let dead things rest.

Alice. Ay, and with him who died Alone in Italy.

Lady Clarence. Much changed, I hear, Had put off levity and put graveness on. The foreign courts report him in his manner

Noble as his young person and old shield. It might be so—but all is over now;

He caught a chill in the lagoons of Venice, And died in Padua.

Mary (looking up suddenly). Died in the true faith?

Lady Clarence. Ay, Madam, happily.

Mary. Happier he than I.

Lady Magdalen. It seems her Highness hath awaken'd. Think you That I might dare to tell her that the Count—

Mary. I will see no man hence for evermore,

Saving my confessor and my cousin Pole.

Lady Magdalen. It is the Count de Feria, my dear lady.

Mary. What Count?

Lady Magdalen. The Count de Feria, from his Majesty

King Philip.

Mary. Philip! quick! loop up my hair!

Throw cushions on that seat, and make it throne-like.

Arrange my dress—the gorgeous Indian shawl

That Philip brought me in our happy days!—

That covers all. So—am I somewhat Queenlike, Bride of the mightiest sovereign upon earth?

Lady Clarence. Ay, so your Grace would bide a moment yet.

Mary. No, no, he brings a letter. I may die

Before I read it. Let me see him at once.

Enter COUNT DE FERIA (kneels)

Feria. I trust your Grace is well.

(Aside) How her hand burns!

Mary. I am not well, but it will better me,

Sir Count, to read the letter which you bring.

Feria. Madam, I bring no letter.

Mary. How! no letter?

Feria. His Highness is so vex'd with strange affairs—

Mary. That his own wife is no affair of his.

Feria. Nay, Madam, nay! he sends his veriest love,

And says, he will come quickly.

Mary. Doth he, indeed?

You, sir, do *you* remember what *you* said When last you came to England?

Feria. Madam, I brought My King's congratulations; it was hoped Your Highness was once more in happy state

To give him an heir male.

Mary. Sir, you said more; You said he would come quickly. I had horses

On all the road from Dover, day and night;

On all the road from Harwich, night and day;

But the child came not, and the husband came not;

And yet he will come quickly. . . Thou hast learnt

Thy lesson, and I mine. There is no need

For Philip so to shame himself again.

Return,

And tell him that I know he comes no more.

Tell him at last I know his love is dead,

And that I am in state to bring forth death—

Thou art commission'd to Elizabeth,
And not to me !

Feria. Mere compliments and wishes.
But shall I take some message from your Grace ?

Mary. Tell her to come and close my dying eyes,
And wear my crown, and dance upon my grave.

Feria. Then I may say your Grace will see your sister ?

Your Grace is too low-spirited. Air and sunshine.

I would we had you, Madam, in our warm Spain.

You droop in your dim London.

Mary. Have him away !
I sicken of his readiness.

Lady Clarence. My Lord Count,
Her Highness is too ill for colloquy.

Feria (*kneels, and kisses her hand*). I wish her Highness better. (*Aside*)
How her hand burns ! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—A HOUSE NEAR LONDON

ELIZABETH, STEWARD OF THE HOUSE-
HOLD, ATTENDANTS

Elizabeth. There's half an angel
wroug'd in your account ;
Methinks I am all angel, that I bear it
Without more ruffling. Cast it o'er
again.

Steward. I were whole devil if I
wroug'd you, Madam.

[*Exit Steward.*]

Attendant. The Count de Feria, from
the King of Spain.

Elizabeth. Ah !—let him enter. Nay,
you need not go :

[*To her Ladies.*]

Remain within the chamber, but apart.
We'll have no private conference. Wel-
come to England !

Enter FERIA

Feria. Fair island star !

Elizabeth. I shine ! What else,
Sir Count ?

Feria. As far as France, and into
Philip's heart.

My King would know if you be fairly
served,

And lodged, and treated.

Elizabeth. You see the lodging, sir,
I am well-served, and am in everything
Most loyal and most grateful to the
Queen.

Feria. You should be grateful to my
master, too.

He spoke of this ; and unto him you owe
That Mary hath acknowledged you her
heir.

Elizabeth. No, not to her nor him ;
but to the people,
Who know my right, and love me, as I
love

The people ! whom God aid !

Feria. You will be Queen,
And, were I Philip—

Elizabeth. Wherefore pause you—
what ?

Feria. Nay, but I speak from mine
own self, not him ;
Your royal sister cannot last ; your hand
Will be much coveted ! What a delicate
one !

Our Spanish ladies have none such—and
there,

Were you in Spain, this fine fair gossamer
gold—

Like sun-gilt breathings on a frosty
dawn—

That hovers round your shoulder—

Elizabeth. Is it so fine ?
Troth, some have said so.

Feria. —would be deemed a miracle.

Elizabeth. Your Philip hath gold hair
and golden beard ;

There must be ladies many with hair like
mine.

Feria. Some few of Gothic blood
have golden hair,
But none like yours.

Elizabeth. I am happy you approve it.

Feria. But as to Philip and your

Grace—consider,—

If such a one as you should match with Spain,

What hinders but that Spain and England join'd,

Should make the mightiest empire earth has known.

Spain would be England on her seas, and England

Mistress of the Indies.

Elizabeth. It may chance, that England

Will be the Mistress of the Indies yet, Without the help of Spain.

Feria. Impossible ; Except you put Spain down.

Wide of the mark ev'n for a madman's dream.

Elizabeth. Perhaps ; but we have seamen. Count de Feria,

I take it that the King hath spoken to you ; But is Don Carlos such a goodly match ?

Feria. Don Carlos, Madam, is but twelve years old.

Elizabeth. Ay, tell the King that I will muse upon it ;

He is my good friend, and I would keep him so ;

But—he would have me Catholic of Rome, And that I scarce can be ; and, sir, till now

My sister's marriage, and my father's marriages,

Make me full fain to live and die a maid. But I am much beholden to your King.

Have you aught else to tell me ?

Feria. Nothing, Madam, Save that methought I gather'd from the Queen

That she would see your Grace before she—died.

Elizabeth. God's death ! and wherefore spake you not before ?

We dally with our lazy moments here, And hers are number'd. Horses there, without !

I am much beholden to the King, your master.

Why did you keep me prating ? Horses, there ! [*Exit Elizabeth, etc.*]

Feria. So from a clear sky falls the thunderbolt !

Don Carlos ? Madam, if you marry Philip,

Then I and he will snaffle your ' God's death,'

And break your paces in, and make you tame ;

God's death, forsooth—you do not know King Philip. [*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.—LONDON. BEFORE THE PALACE

A light burning within. Voices of the night passing

First. Is not yon light in the Queen's chamber ?

Second. Ay,

They say she's dying.

First. So is Cardinal Pole.

May the great angels join their wings, and make

Down for their heads to heaven !

Second. Amen. Come on. [*Exeunt.*]

TWO OTHERS

First. There's the Queen's light. I hear she cannot live.

Second. God curse her and her Legate ! Gardiner burns

Already ; but to pay them full in kind, The hottest hold in all the devil's den Were but a sort of winter ; sir, in Guernsey,

I watch'd a woman burn ; and in her agony

The mother came upon her—a child was born—

And, sir, they hurl'd it back into the fire, That, being but baptized in fire, the babe Might be in fire for ever. Ah, good neighbour,

There should be something fierier than fire To yield them their deserts.

First. Amen to all Your wish, and further.

A Third Voice. Deserts! Amen to what? Whose deserts? Yours? You have a gold ring on your finger, and soft raiment about your body; and is not the woman up yonder sleeping after all she has done, in peace and quietness, on a soft bed, in a closed room, with light, fire, physic, tendance; and I have seen the true men of Christ lying famine-dead by scores, and under no ceiling but the cloud that wept on them, not for them.

First. Friend, tho' so late, it is not safe to preach.

You had best go home. What are you?

Third. What am I? One who cries continually with sweat and tears to the Lord God that it would please Him out of His infinite love to break down all kingship and queenship, all priesthood and prelacy; to cancel and abolish all bonds of human allegiance, all the magistracy, all the nobles, and all the wealthy; and to send us again, according to His promise, the one King, the Christ, and all things in common, as in the day of the first church, when Christ Jesus was King.

First. If ever I heard a madman,—let's away!

Why, you long-winded—— Sir, you go beyond me.

I pride myself on being moderate.

Good night! Go home. Besides, you curse so loud,

The watch will hear you. Get you home at once.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—LONDON. A ROOM IN THE PALACE

A Gallery on one side. The moonlight streaming through a range of windows on the wall opposite. MARY, LADY CLARENCE, LADY MAGDALEN DACRES, ALICE. QUEEN pacing the Gallery. A writing-table in front. QUEEN comes to the table and writes and goes again, pacing the Gallery.

Lady Clarence. Mine eyes are dim: what hath she written? read.

Alice. 'I am dying, Philip; come to me.'

Lady Magdalen. There—up and down, poor lady, up and down.

Alice. And how her shadow crosses one by one

The moonlight casements pattern'd on the wall,

Following her like her sorrow. She turns again.

[*Queen sits and writes, and goes again.*]

Lady Clarence. What hath she written now?

Alice. Nothing; but 'come, come, come,' and all awry,

And blotted by her tears. This cannot last.

[*Queen returns.*]

Mary. I whistle to the bird has broken cage,

And all in vain.

[*Sitting down.*]

Calais gone—Guisnes gone, too—and Philip gone!

Lady Clarence. Dear Madam, Philip is but at the wars;

I cannot doubt but that he comes again; And he is with you in a measure still.

I never look'd upon so fair a likeness As your great King in armour there, his

hand

Upon his helmet.

[*Pointing to the portrait of Philip on the wall.*]

Mary. Doth he not look noble?

I had heard of him in battle over seas,

And I would have my warrior all in arms.

He said it was not courtly to stand helmeted

Before the Queen. He had his gracious moment,

Altho' you'll not believe me. How he smiles

As if he loved me yet!

Lady Clarence. And so he does.

Mary. He never loved me—nay, he could not love me.

It was his father's policy against France.

I am eleven years older than he,

Poor boy!

[*Weeps.*]

Alice. That was a lusty boy of twenty-seven;

[*Aside.*]

Poor enough in God's grace !

Mary. —And all in vain !
The Queen of Scots is married to the
Dauphin,
And Charles, the lord of this low world,
is gone ;

And all his wars and wisdoms past away ;
And in a moment I shall follow him.

Lady Clarence. Nay, dearest Lady,
see your good physician.

Mary. Drugs—but he knows they
cannot help me—says
That rest is all—tells me I must not
think—

That I must rest—I shall rest by and by.
Catch the wild cat, cage him, and when
he springs

And maims himself against the bars, say
'rest' :

Why, you must kill him if you would
have him rest—

Dead or alive you cannot make him happy.

Lady Clarence. Your Majesty has
lived so pure a life,
And done such mighty things by Holy
Church,

I trust that God will make you happy yet.

Mary. What is the strange thing
happiness ? Sit down here :
Tell me thine happiest hour.

Lady Clarence. I will, if that
May make your Grace forget yourself a
little.

There runs a shallow brook across our field
For twenty miles, where the black crow
flies five,

And doth so bound and babble all the way
As if itself were happy. It was May-time,
And I was walking with the man I loved.
I loved him, but I thought I was not loved.
And both were silent, letting the wild
brook

Speak for us—till he stoop'd and gather'd
one

From out a bed of thick forget-me-nots,
Look'd hard and sweet at me, and gave
it me.

I took it, tho' I did not know I took it,
And put it in my bosom, and all at once
I felt his arms about me, and his lips—

Mary. O God ! I have been too slack,
too slack ;

There are Hot Gospellers even among
our guards—

Nobles we dared not touch. We have
but burnt

The heretic priest, workmen, and women
and children.

Wet, famine, ague, fever, storm, wreck,
wrath,—

We have so play'd the coward ; but by
God's grace,

We'll follow Philip's leading, and set up
The Holy Office here—garner the wheat,
And burn the tares with unquenchable fire !
Burn !—

Fie, what a savour ! tell the cooks to close
The doors of all the offices below.

Latimer !

Sir, we are private with our women here—
Ever a rough, blunt, and uncourtly fel-
low—

Thou light a torch that never will go
out !

'Tis out—mine flames. Women, the
Holy Father

Has ta'en the legateship from our cousin
Pole—

Was that well done ? and poor Pole pines
of it,

As I do, to the death. I am but a woman,
I have no power.—Ah, weak and meek
old man,

Seven-fold dishonour'd even in the sight
Of thine own sectaries—No, no. No
pardon !—

Why that was false : there is the right
hand still

Beckons me hence.

Sir, you were burnt for heresy, not for
treason,

Remember that ! 'twas I and Bonner did
it,

And Pole ; we are three to one—Have
you found mercy there,

Grant it me here : and see, he smiles and
goes,

Gentle as in life.

Alice. Madam, who goes ? King
Philip ?

Mary. No, Philip comes and goes,
but never goes.

Women, when I am dead,
Open my heart, and there you will find
written

Two names, Philip and Calais; open
his,—

So that he have one,—

You will find Philip only, policy, policy,—
Ay, worse than that—not one hour true
to me!

Foul maggots crawling in a fester'd
vice!

Adulterous to the very heart of Hell.

Hast thou a knife?

Alice. Ay, Madam, but o' God's
mercy—

Mary. Fool, think'st thou I would
peril mine own soul
By slaughter of the body? I could not,
girl,

Not this way—callous with a constant
stripe,

Unwoundable. The knife!

Alice. Take heed, take heed!
The blade is keen as death.

Mary. This Philip shall not
Stare in upon me in my haggardness;
Old, miserable, diseased,
Incapable of children. Come thou down.
[Cuts out the picture and throws it down.
Lie there. (Wails) O God, I have
kill'd my Philip!

Alice. No,
Madam, you have but cut the canvas out;
We can replace it.

Mary. All is well then; rest—
I will to rest; he said, I must have rest.

[Cries of 'Elizabeth' in the street.
A cry! What's that? Elizabeth? revolt?
A new Northumberland, another Wyatt?
I'll fight it on the threshold of the
grave.

Lady Clarence. Madam, your royal
sister comes to see you.

Mary. I will not see her.
Who knows if Boleyn's daughter be my
sister?

I will see none except the priest. Your
arm.

[To Lady Clarence.

O Saint of Aragon, with that sweet worn
smile

Among thy patient wrinkles—Help me
hence. [Exeunt.

*The PRIEST passes. Enter ELIZABETH
and SIR WILLIAM CECIL*

Elizabeth. Good counsel yours—

No one in waiting? still,
As if the chamberlain were Death himself!
The room she sleeps in—is not this the
way?

No, that way there are voices. Am I
too late?

Cecil . . . God guide me lest I lose the
way. [Exit Elizabeth.

Cecil. Many points weather'd, many
perilous ones,

At last a harbour opens; but therein
Sunk rocks—they need fine steering—
much it is

To be nor mad, nor bigot—have a mind—
Nor let Priests' talk, or dream of worlds
to be,

Miscolour things about her—sudden
touches

For him, or him—sunk rocks; no pas-
sionate faith—

But—if let be—balance and compromise;
Brave, wary, sane to the heart of her—a
Tudor

School'd by the shadow of death—a
Boleyn, too,

Glancing across the Tudor—not so well.

Enter ALICE

How is the good Queen now?

Alice. Away from Philip.
Back in her childhood—prattling to her
mother

Of her betrothal to the Emperor Charles,
And childlike-jealous of him again—and
once

She thank'd her father sweetly for his
book

Against that godless German. Ah, those
days.

Were happy. It was never merry world
In England, since the Bible came among
us.

Cecil. And who says that?

Alice. It is a saying among the Catholics.

Cecil. It never will be merry world in England,

Till all men have their Bible, rich and poor.

Alice. The Queen is dying, or you dare not say it.

Enter ELIZABETH

Elizabeth. The Queen is dead.

Cecil. Then here she stands! my homage.

Elizabeth. She knew me, and acknowledged me her heir,
Pray'd me to pay her debts, and keep the Faith;
Then claspt the cross, and pass'd away in peace.

I left her lying still and beautiful,
More beautiful than in life. Why would you vex yourself,

Poor sister? Sir, I swear I have no heart
To be your Queen. To reign is restless
fence,

Tierce, quart, and trickery. Peace is with the dead.

Her life was winter, for her spring was nipt:

And she loved much: pray God she be forgiven.

Cecil. Peace with the dead, who never were at peace!

Yet she loved one so much—I needs must say—

That never English monarch dying left England so little.

Elizabeth. But with Cecil's aid
And others, if our person be secured
From traitorstabs—we will make England great.

Enter PAGET, and other LORDS OF THE COUNCIL, SIR RALPH BAGENHALL, etc.

Lords. God save Elizabeth, the Queen of England!

Bagenhall. God save the Crown! the Papacy is no more.

Paget (aside). Are we so sure of that?

Acclamation. God save the Queen!

HAROLD

A DRAMA

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

THE RIGHT HON. LORD LYTTON

Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

MY DEAR LORD LYTTON,—After old-world records—such as the Bayeux tapestry and the Roman de Rou,—Edward Freeman's History of the Norman Conquest, and your father's Historical Romance treating of the same times, have been mainly helpful to me in writing this Drama. Your father dedicated his 'Harold' to my father's brother; allow me to dedicate my 'Harold' to yourself.

A. TENNYSON.

SHOW-DAY AT BATTLE ABBEY, 1876

A GARDEN here—May breath and bloom of spring—
The cuckoo yonder from an English elm
Crying 'with my false egg I overwhelm
The native nest': and fancy hears the ring
Of harness, and that deathful arrow sing,
And Saxon battleaxe clang on Norman helm.
Here rose the dragon-banner of our realm:
Here fought, here fell, our Norman-slander'd king.
O Garden blossoming out of English blood!
O strange hate-healer Time! We stroll and stare
Where might made right eight hundred years ago;
Might, right? ay good, so all things make for good—
But he and he, if soul be soul, are where
Each stands full face with all he did below.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KING EDWARD THE CONFESSOR.

STIGAND, *created Archbishop of Canterbury by the Antipope Benedict.*

ALDRED, *Archbishop of York.*

THE NORMAN BISHOP OF LONDON.

HAROLD, *Earl of Wessex, afterwards King of England*

TOSTIG, *Earl of Northumbria*

GURTH, *Earl of East Anglia*

LEOFWIN, *Earl of Kent and Essex*

WULFNOTH

COUNT WILLIAM OF NORMANDY.

WILLIAM RUFUS.

WILLIAM MALET, *a Norman Noble.*¹

EDWIN, *Earl of Mercia*

MORCAR, *Earl of Northumbria after Tostig*

GAMEL, *a Northumbrian Thane.*

ROLF, *a Ponthieu Fisherman.*

OSGOD and ATHELRIC, *Canons from Waltham.*

THE QUEEN, *Edward the Confessor's Wife, Daughter of Godwin.*

ALDWYTH, *Daughter of Algar and Widow of Griffyth, King of Wales.*

EDITH, *Ward of King Edward.*

} Sons of
Godwin.
}
} Sons of Algar of
Mercia.

GUY, *Count of Ponthieu.*

HUGH MARGOT, *a Norman Monk.*

Courtiers, Earls and Thanes, Men-at-Arms, Canons of Waltham, Fishermen, etc.

¹ . . . quidam partim Normannus et Anglus
Compater Heraldi. (*Guy of Amiens*, 587.)

ACT I

SCENE I.—LONDON. THE KING'S
PALACE

(*A comet seen through the open window*)

ALDWYTH, GAMEL, COURTIERs *talking together*

First Courtier. Lo! there once more
—this is the seventh night!

Yon grimly-glaring, treble-brandish'd
scourge

Of England!

Second Courtier. Horrible!

First Courtier. Look you, there's a
star

That dances in it as mad with agony!

Third Courtier. Ay, like a spirit in
Hell who skips and flies

To right and left, and cannot scape the
flame.

Second Courtier. Steam'd upward
from the undescendible

Abysm.

First Courtier. Or floated downward
from the throne

Of God Almighty.

Aldwyth. Gamel, son of Orm,

What thinkest thou this means?

Gamel. War, my dear lady!

Aldwyth. Doth this affright thee?

Gamel. Mightily, my dear lady!

Aldwyth. Stand by me then, and look
upon my face,

Not on the comet.

Enter MORCAR

Brother! why so pale?

Morcar. It glares in heaven, it flares
upon the Thames,

The people are as thick as bees below,
They hum like bees,—they cannot speak
—for awe;

Look to the skies, then to the river, strike
Their hearts, and hold their babies up to it.
I think that they would Molochize them
too,

To have the heavens clear.

Aldwyth. They fight not me.

Enter LEOFWIN, after him GURTH

Ask thou Lord Leofwin what he thinks
of this!

Morcar. Lord Leofwin, dost thou
believe, that these

Three rods of blood-red fire up yonder
mean

The doom of England and the wrath of
Heaven?

Bishop of London (passing). Did ye
not cast with bestial violence

Our holy Norman bishops down from all
Their thrones in England? I alone
remain.

Why should not Heaven be wroth?

Leofwin. With us, or thee?

Bishop of London. Did ye not outlaw
your archbishop Robert,

Robert of Jumiéges—well-nigh murder
him too?

Is there no reason for the wrath of Heaven?

Leofwin. Why then the wrath of
Heaven hath three tails,

The devil only one.

[*Exit Bishop of London.*]

Enter ARCHBISHOP STIGAND

Ask our Archbishop.

Stigand should know the purposes of
Heaven.

Stigand. Not I. I cannot read the
face of heaven;

Perhaps our vines will grow the better
for it.

Leofwin (laughing). He can but read
the king's face on his coins.

Stigand. Ay, ay, young lord, there the
king's face is power.

Gurth. O father, mock not at a public
fear,

But tell us, is this pendent hell in heaven
A harm to England?

Stigand. Ask it of King Edward!
And he may tell thee, I am a harm to
England.

Old uncanonical Stigand—ask of me
Who had my pallium from an Antipope!
Not he the man—for in our windy world
What's up is faith, what's down is heresy.

Our friends, the Normans, help to shake
his chair.

I have a Norman fever on me, son,
And cannot answer sanely . . . What it
means?

Ask our broad Earl.

[*Pointing to HAROLD, who enters.*

Harold (seeing Gamel). Hail, Gamel,
son of Orm!

Albeit no rolling stone, my good friend
Gamel,

Thou hast rounded since we met. Thy
life at home

Is easier than mine here. Look! am I
not

Work-wan, flesh-fallen?

Gamel. Art thou sick, good Earl?

Harold. Sick as an autumn swallow
for a voyage,

Sick for an idle week of hawk and hound
Beyond the seas—a change! When
camest thou hither?

Gamel. To-day, good Earl.

Harold. Is the North quiet, Gamel?

Gamel. Nay, there be murmurs, for
thy brother breaks us

With over-taxing—quiet, ay, as yet—
Nothing as yet.

Harold. Stand by him, mine old
friend,

Thou art a great voice in Northumber-
land!

Advise him: speak him sweetly, he will
hear thee.

He is passionate but honest. Stand thou
by him!

More talk of this to-morrow, if yon weird
sign

Not blast us in our dreams.—Well, father
Stigand—

[*To Stigand, who advances to him.*

Stigand (pointing to the comet). War
there, my son? is that the doom
of England?

Harold. Why not the doom of all the
world as well?

For all the world sees it as well as Eng-
land.

These meteors came and went before our
day,

Not harming any: it threatens us no
more

Than French or Norman. War? the
worst that follows

Things that seem jerk'd out of the common
rut

Of Nature is the hot religious fool,
Who, seeing war in heaven, for heaven's
credit

Makes it on earth: but look, where
Edward draws

A faint foot hither, leaning upon Tostig.
He hath learnt to love our Tostig much
of late.

Leofwin. And he hath learnt, despite
the tiger in him,

To sleek and supple himself to the king's
hand.

Gurth. I trust the kingly touch that
cures the evil

May serve to charm the tiger out of him.

Leofwin. He hath as much of cat as
tiger in him.

Our Tostig loves the hand and not the
man.

Harold. Nay! Better die than lie!

Enter KING, QUEEN, and TOSTIG

Edward. In heaven signs!
Signs upon earth! signs everywhere!
your Priests

Gross, worldly, simoniacal, unlearn'd!
They scarce can read their Psalter; and
your churches

Uncouth, unhandsome, while in Norman-
land

God speaks thro' abler voices, as He dwells
In statelier shrines. I say not this, as being
Half Norman-blooded, nor as some have
held,

Because I love the Norman better—no,
But dreading God's revenge upon this
realm

For narrowness and coldness: and I say
it

For the last time perchance, before I go
To find the sweet refreshment of the Saints.
I have lived a life of utter purity:
I have builded the great church of Holy
Peter:

I have wrought miracles—to God the glory—

And miracles will in my name be wrought
Hereafter.—I have fought the fight and
go—

I see the flashing of the gates of pearl—
And it is well with me, tho' some of you
Have scorn'd me—ay—but after I am
gone

Woe, woe to England! I have had a
vision;

The seven sleepers in the cave at Ephesus
Have turn'd from right to left.

Harold. My most dear Master,
What matters? let them turn from left
to right

And sleep again.

Tostig. Too hardy with thy king!
A life of prayer and fasting well may see
Deeper into the mysteries of heaven
Than thou, good brother.

Aldwyth (aside). Sees he into thine,
That thou wouldst have his promise for
the crown?

Edward. Tostig says true; my son,
thou art too hard,
Not stagger'd by this ominous earth and
heaven:

But heaven and earth are threads of the
same loom,

Play into one another, and weave the web
That may confound thee yet.

Harold. Nay, I trust not,
For I have served thee long and honestly.

Edward. I know it, son; I am not
thankless: thou

Hast broken all my foes, lighten'd for me
The weight of this poor crown, and left
me time

And peace for prayer to gain a better one.
Twelve years of service! England loves
thee for it.

Thou art the man to rule her!

Aldwyth (aside). So, not Tostig!

Harold. And after those twelve years
a boon, my king,

Respite, a holiday: thyself wast wont
To love the chase: thy leave to set my feet
On board, and hunt and hawk beyond
the seas!

Edward. What with this flaming
horror overhead?

Harold. Well, when it passes then.

Edward. Ay if it pass.
Go not to Normandy—go not to Nor-
mandy.

Harold. And wherefore not, my king,
to Normandy?

Is not my brother Wulfnoth hostage there
For my dead father's loyalty to thee?

I pray thee, let me hence and bring him
home.

Edward. Not thee, my son: some
other messenger.

Harold. And why not me, my lord,
to Normandy?

Is not the Norman Count thy friend and
mine?

Edward. I pray thee, do not go to
Normandy.

Harold. Because my father drove the
Normans out
Of England?—That was many a summer
gone—

Forgotten and forgiven by them and thee.

Edward. Harold, I will not yield
thee leave to go.

Harold. Why then to Flanders. I
will hawk and hunt
In Flanders.

Edward. Be there not fair woods and
fields

In England? Wilful, wilful. Go—the
Saints

Pilot and prosper all thy wandering out
And homeward. Tostig, I am faint again.

Son Harold, I will in and pray for thee.

[*Exit, leaning on Tostig, and
followed by Stigand, Morcar, and
Courtiers.*]

Harold. What lies upon the mind of
our good king

That he should harp this way on
Normandy?

Queen. Brother, the king is wiser
than he seems;

And Tostig knows it; Tostig loves the
king.

Harold. And love should know; and
—be the king so wise,—

Then Tostig too were wiser than he seems.
I love the man but not his phantasies.

Re-enter TOSTIG

Well, brother,
When didst thou hear from thy North-
umbria?

Tostig. When did I hear aught but
this 'When' from thee?

Leave me alone, brother, with my
Northumbria:

She is *my* mistress, let *me* look to her!
The King hath made me Earl; make me
not fool!

Nor make the King a fool, who made
me Earl!

Harold. No, Tostig—lest I make
myself a fool

Who made the King who made thee,
make thee Earl.

Tostig. Why chafe me then? Thou
knowest I soon go wild.

Gurth. Come, come! as yet thou art
not gone so wild

But thou canst hear the best and wisest
of us.

Harold. So says old Gurth, not I:
yet hear! thine earldom,

Tostig, hath been a kingdom. Their old
crown

Is yet a force among them, a sun set
But leaving light enough for Alfgar's house
To strike thee down by—nay, this ghastly
glare

May heat their fancies.

Tostig. My most worthy brother,
Thou art the quietest man in all the world—
Ay, ay and wise in peace and great in war—
Pray God the people choose thee for
their king!

But all the powers of the house of Godwin
Are not enframed in thee.

Harold. Thank the Saints, no!
But thou hast drain'd them shallow by
thy tolls,

And thou art ever here about the King:
Thine absence well may seem a want of
care.

Cling to their love; for, now the sons of
Godwin

Sit topmost in the field of England, envy,
Like the rough bear beneath the tree,
good brother,

Waits till the man let go.

Tostig. Good counsel truly!
I heard from my Northumbria yesterday.

Harold. How goes it then with thy
Northumbria? Well?

Tostig. And wouldst thou that it went
ought else than well?

Harold. I would it went as well as
with mine earldom,
Leofwin's and Gurth's.

Tostig. Ye govern milder men.

Gurth. We have made them milder
by just government.

Tostig. Ay, ever give yourselves your
own good word.

Leofwin. An honest gift, by all the
Saints, if giver

And taker be but honest! but they bribe
Each other, and so often, an honest world
Will not believe them.

Harold. I may tell thee, Tostig,
I heard from thy Northumberland to-day.

Tostig. From spies of thine to spy
my nakedness

In my poor North!

Harold. There is a movement there,
A blind one—nothing yet.

Tostig. Crush it at once
With all the power I have!—I must—I
will!—

Crush it half-born! Fool still? or wis-
dom there,

My wise head-shaking Harold?

Harold. Make not thou
The nothing something. Wisdom when
in power

And wisest, should not frown as Power,
but smile

As kindness, watching all, till the true
must

Shall make her strike as Power: but
when to strike—

O Tostig, O dear brother—If they prance,
Rein in, not lash them, lest they rear and
run

And break both neck and axle.

Tostig. Good again!

Good counsel tho' scarce needed. Pour
not water

In the full vessel running out at top
To swamp the house.

Leofwin. Nor thou be a wild thing
Out of the waste, to turn and bite the
hand

Would help thee from the trap.

Tostig. Thou playest in tune.

Leofwin. To the deaf adder thee, that
wilt not dance

However wisely charm'd.

Tostig. No more, no more !

Gurth. I likewise cry 'no more.'
Unwholesome talk

For Godwin's house ! *Leofwin*, thou
hast a tongue !

Tostig, thou look'st as thou wouldst
spring upon him.

St. Olaf, not while I am by ! Come,
come,

Join hands, let brethren dwell in unity ;
Let kith and kin stand close as our
shield-wall,

Who breaks us then ? I say, thou hast
a tongue,

And *Tostig* is not stout enough to bear it.
Vex him not, *Leofwin*.

Tostig. No, I am not vext,—
Altho' ye seek to vex me, one and all.
I have to make report of my good earldom
To the good king who gave it—not to
you—

Not any of you.—I am not vext at all.

Harold. The king ? the king is ever
at his prayers ;

In all that handles matter of the state
I am the king.

Tostig. That shalt thou never be
If I can thwart thee.

Harold. Brother, brother !

Tostig. Away !
[*Exit Tostig.*]

Queen. Spite of this grisly star ye
three must gall

Poor *Tostig*.

Leofwin. *Tostig*, sister, galls himself ;
He cannot smell a rose but pricks his nose
Against the thorn, and rails against the
rose.

Queen. I am the only rose of all the
stock

That never thorn'd him ; *Edward* loves
him, so

Ye hate him. *Harold* always hated him.
Why—how they fought when boys—and,

Holy Mary !

How *Harold* used to beat him !

Harold. Why, boys will fight.
Leofwin would often fight me, and I beat
him.

Even old *Gurth* would fight. I had
much ado

To hold mine own against old *Gurth*.
Old *Gurth*,

We fought like great states for grave
cause ; but *Tostig*—

On a sudden—at a something—for a
nothing—

The boy would fist me hard, and when
we fought

I conquer'd, and he loved me none the less,
Till thou wouldst get him all apart, and
tell him

That where he was but worsted, he was
wrong'd.

Ah ! thou hast taught the king to spoil
him too ;

Now the spoilt child sways both. Take
heed, take heed ;

Thou art the *Queen* ; ye are boy and girl
no more :

Side not with *Tostig* in any violence,
Lest thou be sideways guilty of the
violence.

Queen. Come fall not foul on me. I
leave thee, brother.

Harold. Nay, my good sister—

[*Exeunt Queen, Harold, Gurth, and
Leofwin.*]

Aldwyth. *Gamel*, son of *Orm*,
What thinkest thou this means ?

[*Pointing to the comet.*]

Gamel. War, my dear lady,
War, waste, plague, famine, all malig-
nities.

Aldwyth. It means the fall of *Tostig*
from his earldom.

Gamel. That were too small a matter
for a comet !

Aldwyth. It means the lifting of the house of Alfgar.

Gamel. Too small! a comet would not show for that!

Aldwyth. Not small for thee, if thou canst compass it.

Gamel. Thy love?

Aldwyth. As much as I can give thee, man;

This Tostig is, or like to be, a tyrant;

Stir up thy people: oust him!

Gamel. And thy love?

Aldwyth. As much as thou canst bear.

Gamel. I can bear all,

And not be giddy.

Aldwyth. No more now: to-morrow.

SCENE II.—IN THE GARDEN. THE KING'S HOUSE NEAR LONDON. SUNSET.

Edith. Mad for thy mate, passionate nightingale . . .

I love thee for it—ay, but stay a moment;

He can but stay a moment: he is going.

I fain would hear him coming! . . . near me . . . near,

Somewhere—To draw him nearer with a charm

Like thine to thine.

(*Singing*)

Love is come with a song and a smile,
Welcome Love with a smile and a song:

Love can stay but a little while.

Why cannot he stay? They call him away:

Ye do him wrong, ye do him wrong;

Love will stay for a whole life long.

Enter HAROLD

Harold. The nightingales in Havering-atte-Bower

Sang out their loves so loud, that Edward's prayers

Were deafen'd and he pray'd them dumb, and thus

I dumb thee too, my wingless nightingale!

[*Kissing her.*]

Edith. Thou art my music! Would their wings were mine

To follow thee to Flanders! Must thou go?

Harold. Not must, but will. It is but for one moon.

Edith. Leaving so many foes in Edward's hall

To league against thy weal. The Lady Aldwyth

Was here to-day, and when she touch'd on thee,

She stammer'd in her hate; I am sure she hates thee,

Pants for thy blood.

Harold. Well, I have given her cause—

I fear no woman.

Edith. Hate not one who felt Some pity for thy hater! I am sure

Her morning wanted sunlight, she so praised

The convent and lone life—within the pale—

Beyond the passion. Nay—she held with Edward,

At least methought she held with holy Edward,

That marriage was half sin.

Harold. A lesson worth Finger and thumb—thus (*snaps his fingers*). And my answer to it—

See here—an interwoven H and E!

Take thou this ring; I will demand his ward

From Edward when I come again. Ay, would she?

She to shut up my blossom in the dark!

Thou art my nun, thy cloister in mine arms.

Edith (taking the ring). Yea, but Earl Tostig—

Harold. That's a truer fear! For if the North take fire, I should be back;

I shall be, soon enough.

Edith. Ay, but last night An evil dream that ever came and went—

Harold. A gnat that vex't thy pillow! Had I been by,

I would have spoil'd his horn. My girl, what was it?

Edith. Oh ! that thou wert not going !
For so methought it was our marriage-
morn,

And while we stood together, a dead man
Rose from behind the altar, tore away
My marriage ring, and rent my bridal veil ;
And then I turn'd, and saw the church
all fill'd

With dead men upright from their graves,
and all

The dead men made at thee to murder
thee,

But thou didst back thyself against a
pillar,

And strike among them with thy battle-
axe—

There, what a dream !

Harold. Well, well—a dream—
no more !

Edith. Did not Heaven speak to men
in dreams of old ?

Harold. Ay—well—of old. I tell
thee what, my child ;

Thou hast misread this merry dream of
thine,

Taken the rifted pillars of the wood
For smooth stone columns of the sanc-
tuary,

The shadows of a hundred fat dead deer
For dead men's ghosts. True, that the
battle-axe

Was out of place ; it should have been
the bow.—

Come, thou shalt dream no more such
dreams ; I swear it,

By mine own eyes—and these two sap-
phires—these

Twin rubies, that are amulets against all
The kisses of all kind of womankind

In Flanders, till the sea shall roll me back
To tumble at thy feet.

Edith. That would but shame me,
Rather than make me vain. The sea may
roll

Sand, shingle, shore-weed, not the living
rock

Which guards the land.

Harold. Except it be a soft one,
And undereaten to the fall. Mine
amulet . . .

This last . . . upon thine eyelids, to
shut in

A happier dream. Sleep, sleep, and thou
shalt see

My grayhounds fleeting like a beam of
light,

And hear my peregrine and her bells in
heaven ;

And other bells on earth, which yet are
heaven's ;

Guess what they be.

Edith. He cannot guess who knows.
Farewell, my king.

Harold. Not yet, but then—my queen.
[*Exeunt.*]

Enter ALDWYTH from the thicket

Aldwyth. The kiss that charms thine
eyelids into sleep,

Will hold mine waking. Hate him ? I
could love him

More, tenfold, than this fearful child can
do ;

Griffyth I hated : why not hate the foe
Of England ? Griffyth when I saw him
flee,

Chased deer-like up his mountains, all
the blood

That should have only pulsed for Griffyth,
beat

For his pursuer. I love him or think I
love him.

If he were King of England, I his queen,
I might be sure of it. Nay, I do love
him.—

She must be cloister'd somehow, lest the
king

Should yield his ward to Harold's will.
What harm ?

She hath but blood enough to live, not
love.—

When Harold goes and Tostig, shall I
play

The craftier Tostig with him ? fawn upon
him ?

Chime in with all ? ' O thou more saint
than king ! '

And that were true enough. ' O blessed
relics ! '

' O Holy Peter ! ' If he found me thus,

Harold might hate me ; he is broad and honest,
Breathing an easy gladness . . . not
like Aldwyth . . .

For which I strangely love him. Should
not England

Love Aldwyth, if she stay the feuds that
part

The sons of Godwin from the sons of
Alfgar

By such a marrying? Courage, noble
Aldwyth !

Let all thy people bless thee !

Our wild Tostig,
Edward hath made him Earl : he would
be king :—

The dog that snapt the shadow, dropt the
bone.—

I trust he may do well, this Gamel, whom
I play upon, that he may play the note
Whereat the dog shall howl and run, and
Harold

Hear the king's music, all alone with him,
Pronounced his heir of England.

I see the goal and half the way to it.—
Peace-lover is our Harold for the sake
Of England's wholeness—so—to shake
the North

With earthquake and disruption—some
division—

Then fling mine own fair person in the gap
A sacrifice to Harold, a peace-offering,
A scape-goat marriage—all the sins of
both

The houses on mine head—then a fair life
And bless the Queen of England.

Morcar (coming from the thicket). Art
thou assured

By this, that Harold loves but Edith ?

Aldwyth. Morcar !

Why creep'st thou like a timorous beast
of prey

Out of the bush by night ?

Morcar. I follow'd thee.

Aldwyth. Follow my lead, and I will
make thee earl.

Morcar. What lead then ?

Aldwyth. Thou shalt flash it secretly
Among the good Northumbrian folk,
that I—

That Harold loves me—yea, and presently
That I and Harold are betroth'd—and
last—

Perchance that Harold wrongs me ; tho'
I would not

That it should come to that.

Morcar. I will both flash

And thunder for thee.

Aldwyth. I said 'secretly' ;

It is the flash that murders, the poor
thunder

Never harm'd head.

Morcar. But thunder may bring down
That which the flash hath stricken.

Aldwyth. Down with Tostig !

That first of all.—And when doth Harold
go ?

Morcar. To-morrow—first to Bosham,
then to Flanders.

Aldwyth. Not to come back till
Tostig shall have shown

And reddened with his people's blood the
teeth

That shall be broken by us—yea, and
thou

Chair'd in his place. Good-night, and
dream thyself

Their chosen Earl. [*Exit Aldwyth.*]

Morcar. Earl first, and after that
Who knows I may not dream myself their
king !

ACT II

SCENE I.—SEASHORE. PONTHEIU. NIGHT

HAROLD and his Men, wrecked

Harold. Friends, in that last inhospitable plunge

Our boat hath burst her ribs ; but ours
are whole ;

I have but bark'd my hands.

Attendant. I dug mine into

My old fast friend the shore, and clinging
thus

Felt the remorseless outdraught of the
deep

Haul like a great strong fellow at my legs,

And then I rose and ran. The blast that came

So suddenly hath fallen as suddenly—
Put thou the comet and this blast together—

Harold. Put thou thyself and mother-wit together.

Be not a fool!

Enter Fishermen with torches, HAROLD going up to one of them, ROLF

Wickèd sea-will-o'-the-wisp!
Wolf of the shore! dog, with thy lying lights

Thou hast betray'd us on these rocks of thine!

Rolf. Ay, but thou liest as loud as the black herring-pond behind thee. We be fishermen; I came to see after my nets.

Harold. To drag us into them. Fishermen? devils!

Who, while ye fish for men with your false fires,

Let the great Devil fish for your own souls.

Rolf. Nay then, we be liker the blessed Apostles; *they* were fishers of men, Father Jean says.

Harold. I had liefer that the fish had swallowed me,

Like Jonah, than have known there were such devils.

What's to be done?

[*To his Men—goes apart with them.*]

Fisherman. Rolf, what fish did swallow Jonah?

Rolf. A whale!

Fisherman. Then a whale to a whelk we have swallowed the King of England. I saw him over there. Look thee, Rolf, when I was down in the fever, *she* was down with the hunger, and thou didst stand by her and give her thy crabs, and set her up again, till now, by the patient Saints, *she's* as crabb'd as ever.

Rolf. And I'll give her my crabs again, when thou art down again.

Fisherman. I thank thee, Rolf. Run thou to Count Guy; he is hard at hand. Tell him what hath crept into our creel, and he will fee thee as freely as he will

wrench this outlander's ransom out of him—and why not? for what right had he to get himself wrecked on another man's land?

Rolf. Thou art the human-heartedest, Christian-charitiest of all crab-catchers. Share and share alike! [*Exit.*]

Harold (to Fisherman). Fellow, dost thou catch crabs?

Fisherman. As few as I may in a wind, and less than I would in a calm. Ay!

Harold. I have a mind that thou shalt catch no more.

Fisherman. How?

Harold. I have a mind to brain thee with mine axe.

Fisherman. Ay, do, do, and our great Count-crab will make his nippers meet in thine heart; he'll sweat it out of thee, he'll sweat it out of thee. Look, he's here! He'll speak for himself! Hold thine own, if thou canst!

Enter GUY, COUNT OF PONTIEU

Harold. Guy, Count of Ponthieu?

Guy. Harold, Earl of Wessex!

Harold. Thy villains with their lying lights have wreck'd us!

Guy. Art thou not Earl of Wessex?

Harold. In mine earldom A man may hang gold bracelets on a bush,

And leave them for a year, and coming back

Find them again.

Guy. Thou art a mighty man In thine own earldom!

Harold. Were such murderous liars In Wessex—if I caught them, they should hang Cliff-gibbeted for sea-marks; our sea-mew Winging their only wail!

Guy. Ay, but my men Hold that the shipwreckt are accursed of God;—

What hinders me to hold with mine own men?

Harold. The Christian manhood of the man who reigns!

Guy. Ay, rave thy worst, but in our
 oubliettes
 Thou shalt or rot or ransom. Hale him
 hence ! [*To one of his Attendants.*
 Fly thou to William ; tell him we have
 Harold.

SCENE II.—BAYEUX. PALACE

COUNT WILLIAM and WILLIAM MALET

William. We hold our Saxon wood-
 cock in the springe,
 But he begins to flutter. As I think
 He was thine host in England when I
 went
 To visit Edward.

Malet. Yea, and there, my lord,
 To make allowance for their rougher
 fashions,
 I found him all a noble host should be.

William. Thou art his friend : thou
 know'st my claim on England
 Thro' Edward's promise : we have him
 in the toils.

And it were well, if thou shouldst let him
 feel,
 How dense a fold of danger nets him
 round,
 So that he bristle himself against my
 will.

Malet. What would I do, my lord,
 if I were you ?

William. What wouldst thou do ?

Malet. My lord, he is thy guest.

William. Nay, by the splendour of
 God, no guest of mine.

He came not to see me, had past me by
 To hunt and hawk elsewhere, save for
 the fate

Which hunted *him* when that un-Saxon
 blast,

And bolts of thunder moulded in high
 heaven

To serve the Norman purpose, drave and
 crack'd

His boat on Ponthieu beach ; where our
 friend Guy

Had wrung his ransom from him by the
 rack,

But that I stept between and purchased
 him,

Translating his captivity from Guy
 To mine own hearth at Bayeux, where
 he sits

My ransom'd prisoner.

Malet. Well, if not with gold,
 With golden deeds and iron strokes that
 brought

Thy war with Brittany to a goodlier close
 Than else had been, he paid his ransom
 back.

William. So that henceforth they are
 not like to league

With Harold against *me*.

Malet. A marvel, how
 He from the liquid sands of Coesnon

Haled thy shore-swallow'd, armour'd
 Normans up

To fight for thee again !

William. Perchance against
 Their saver, save thou save him from
 himself.

Malet. But I should let him home
 again, my lord.

William. Simple ! let fly the bird
 within the hand,

To catch the bird again within the bush !
 No.

Smooth thou my way, before he clash
 with me ;

I want his voice in England for the
 crown,

I want thy voice with him to bring him
 round ;

And being brave he must be subtly cow'd,
 And being truthful wrought upon to swear
 Vows that he dare not break. England
 our own

Thro' Harold's help, he shall be my dear
 friend

As well as thine, and thou thyself shalt
 have

Large lordship there of lands and territory.

Malet. I knew thy purpose ; he and
 Wulfnoth never

Have met, except in public ; shall they
 meet

In private ? I have often talk'd with
 Wulfnoth,

And stuff'd the boy with fears that these
may act

On Harold when they meet.

William. Then let them meet !

Malet. I can but love this noble,
honest Harold.

William. Love him ! why not ? thine
is a loving office,

I have commission'd thee to save the
man :

Help the good ship, showing the sunken
rock,

Or he is wreckt for ever.

Enter WILLIAM RUFUS

William Rufus. Father.

William. Well, boy.

William Rufus. They have taken
away the toy thou gavest me,

The Norman knight.

William. Why, boy ?

William Rufus. Because I broke
The horse's leg—it was mine own to
break ;

I like to have my toys, and break them too.

William. Well, thou shalt have
another Norman knight !

William Rufus. And may I break his
legs ?

William. Yea,—get thee gone !

William Rufus. I'll tell them I have
had my way with thee. [*Exit.*]

Malet. I never knew thee check thy
will for ought

Save for the prattling of thy little ones.

William. Who shall be kings of
England. I am heir

Of England by the promise of her king.

Malet. But there the great Assembly
choose their king,

The choice of England is the voice of
England.

William. I will be king of England
by the laws,

The choice, and voice of England.

Malet. Can that be ?

William. The voice of any people is
the sword

That guards them, or the sword that beats
them down.

Here comes the would-be what I will
be . . . kinglike . . .

Tho' scarce at ease ; for, save our meshes
break,

More kinglike he than like to prove a
king.

*Enter HAROLD, musing, with his eyes
on the ground*

He sees me not—and yet he dreams of
me.

Earl, wilt thou fly my falcons this fair
day ?

They are of the best, strong-wing'd against
the wind.

*Harold (looking up suddenly, having
caught but the last word).* Which
way does it blow ?

William. Blowing for England, ha ?
Not yet. Thou hast not learnt thy
quarters here.

The winds so cross and jostle among
these towers.

Harold. Count of the Normans, thou
hast ransom'd us,

Maintain'd, and entertain'd us royally !

William. And thou for us hast fought
as loyally,

Which binds us friendship-fast for ever !

Harold. Good !

But lest we turn the scale of courtesy

By too much pressure on it, I would
fain,

Since thou hast promised Wulfnoth home
with us,

Be home again with Wulfnoth.

William. Stay—as yet

Thou hast but seen how Norman hands
can strike,

But walk'd our Norman field, scarce
touch'd or tasted

The splendours of our Court.

Harold. I am in no mood :

I should be as the shadow of a cloud

Crossing your light.

William. Nay, rest a week or two,

And we will fill thee full of Norman sun,
And send thee back among thine island

mists

With laughter.

Harold. Count, I thank thee, but
had rather
Breathe the free wind from off our Saxon
downs,
Tho' charged with all the wet of all the
west.

William. Why if thou wilt, so let it
be—thou shalt.

That were a graceless hospitality
To chain the free guest to the banquet-
board ;

To-morrow we will ride with thee to
Harfleur,

And see thee shipt, and pray in thy behalf
For happier homeward winds than that
which crack'd

Thy bark at Ponthieu,—yet to us, in faith,
A happy one—whereby we came to know
Thy valour and thy value, noble earl.

Ay, and perchance a happy one for thee,
Provided—I will go with thee to-mor-
row—

Nay—but there be conditions, easy ones,
So thou, fair friend, will take them easily.

Enter PAGE

Page. My lord, there is a post from
over seas

With news for thee. [*Exit Page.*

William. Come, Malet, let us hear !

[*Exeunt Count William and Malet.*

Harold. Conditions? What condi-
tions? pay him back

His ransom? 'easy'—that were easy—
nay—

No money-lover he! What said the
King?

'I pray you do not go to Normandy.'

And fate hath blown me hither, bound
me too

With bitter obligation to the Count—

Have I not fought it out? What did he
mean?

There lodged a gleaming grimness in his
eyes,

Gave his shorn smile the lie. The walls
oppress me,

And yon huge keep that hinders half the
heaven.

Free air! free field!

[*Moves to go out. A Man-at-arms
follows him.*

Harold (to the Man-at-arms). I need
thee not. Why dost thou follow
me?

Man-at-arms. I have the Count's
commands to follow thee.

Harold. What then? Am I in danger
in this court?

Man-at-arms. I cannot tell. I have
the Count's commands.

Harold. Stand out of earshot then,
and keep me still

In eyeshot.

Man-at-arms. Yea, lord Harold.

[*Withdraws.*

Harold. And arm'd men

Ever keep watch beside my chamber door,
And if I walk within the lonely wood,
There is an arm'd man ever glides behind !

Enter MALET

Why am I follow'd, haunted, harass'd,
watch'd?

See yonder !

[*Pointing to the Man-at-arms.*

Malet. 'Tis the good Count's care for
thee !

The Normans love thee not, nor thou the
Normans,

Or—so they deem.

Harold. But wherefore is the wind,
Which way soever the vane-arrow swing,
Not ever fair for England? Why but
now

He said (thou heardest him) that I must
not hence

Save on conditions.

Malet. So in truth he said.

Harold. Malet, thy mother was an
Englishwoman ;

There somewhere beats an English pulse
in thee !

Malet. Well—for my mother's sake
I love your England,
But for my father I love Normandy.

Harold. Speak for thy mother's sake,
and tell me true.

Malet. Then for my mother's sake,
and England's sake

That suffers in the daily want of thee,
Obey the Count's conditions, my good friend.

Harold. How, Malet, if they be not honourable !

Malet. Seem to obey them.

Harold. Better die than lie !

Malet. Choose therefore whether thou wilt have thy conscience
White as a maiden's hand, or whether England

Be shatter'd into fragments.

Harold. News from England ?

Malet. Morcar and Edwin have stirr'd up the Thanes
Against thy brother Tostig's governance ;
And all the North of Humber is one storm.

Harold. I should be there, Malet, I should be there !

Malet. And Tostig in his own hall on suspicion
Hath massacred the Thane that was his guest,
Gamel, the son of Orm : and there be more
As villainously slain.

Harold. The wolf ! the beast !
Ill news for guests, ha, Malet ! More ?
What more ?
What do they say ? did Edward know of this ?

Malet. They say, his wife was knowing and abetting.

Harold. They say, his wife !—To marry and have no husband
Makes the wife fool. My God, I should be there.

I'll hack my way to the sea.

Malet. Thou canst not, Harold ;
Our Duke is all between thee and the sea,

Our Duke is all about thee like a God ;
All passes block'd. Obey him, speak him fair,

For he is only debonair to those
That follow where he leads, but stark as death

To those that cross him.—Look thou, here is Wulfnoth !

I leave thee to thy talk with him alone ;

How wan, poor lad ! how sick and sad for home ! *[Exit Malet.]*

Harold (muttering). Go not to Normandy—go not to Normandy !

Enter WULFNOTH

Poor brother ! still a hostage !

Wulfnoth. Yea, and I
Shall see the dewy kiss of dawn no more
Make blush the maiden-white of our tall cliffs,

Nor mark the sea-bird rouse himself and hover

Above the windy ripple, and fill the sky
With free sea-laughter—never—save indeed

Thou canst make yield this iron-mooded Duke

To let me go.

Harold. Why, brother, so he will ;
But on conditions. Canst thou guess at them ?

Wulfnoth. Draw nearer,—I was in the corridor,
I saw him coming with his brother Odo
The Bayeux bishop, and I hid myself.

Harold. They did thee wrong who made thee hostage ; thou
Wast ever fearful.

Wulfnoth. And he spoke—I heard him—

'This Harold is not of the royal blood,
Can have no right to the crown,' and
Odo said,

'Thine is the right, for thine the might ;
he is here,
And yonder is thy keep.'

Harold. No, Wulfnoth, no.

Wulfnoth. And William laugh'd and swore that might was right,
Far as he knew in this poor world of ours—

'Marry, the Saints must go along with us,

And, brother, we will find a way,' said he—

Yea, yea, he would be king of England.

Harold. Never !

Wulfnoth. Yea, but thou must not this way answer him.

Harold. Is it not better still to speak the truth?

Wulfnoth. Not here, or thou wilt never hence nor I:

For in the racing toward this golden goal
He turns not right or left, but tramples flat

Whatever thwarts him; hast thou never heard

His savagery at Alençon,—the town
Hung out raw hides along their walls,
and cried

‘Work for the tanner.’

Harold. That had anger’d me
Had I been William.

Wulfnoth. Nay, but he had prisoners,
He tore their eyes out, sliced their hands
away,

And flung them streaming o’er the battle-
ments

Upon the heads of those who walk’d
within—

O speak him fair, Harold, for thine own
sake.

Harold. Your Welshman says, ‘The
Truth against the World,’

Much more the truth against myself.

Wulfnoth. Thyself?

But for my sake, oh brother! oh! for
my sake!

Harold. Poor Wulfnoth! do they not
entreat thee well?

Wulfnoth. I see the blackness of my
dungeon loom

Across their lamps of revel, and beyond
The merriest murmurs of their banquet
clank

The shackles that will bind me to the
wall.

Harold. Too fearful still!

Wulfnoth. Oh no, no—speak
him fair!

Call it to temporize; and not to lie;

Harold, I do not counsel thee to lie.

The man that hath to foil a murderous aim
May, surely, play with words.

Harold. Words are the man.

Nor ev’n for thy sake, brother, would I
lie.

Wulfnoth. Then for thine Edith?

Harold. There thou prick’st me
deep.

Wulfnoth. And for our Mother Eng-
land?

Harold. Deeper still.

Wulfnoth. And deeper still the deep-
down oubliette,

Down thirty feet below the smiling day—
In blackness—dogs’ food thrown upon
thy head.

And over thee the suns arise and set,
And the lark sings, the sweet stars come
and go,

And men are at their markets, in their
fields,

And woo their loves and have forgotten
thee;

And thou art upright in thy living grave,
Where there is barely room to shift thy
side,

And all thine England hath forgotten thee;
And he our lazy-pious Norman King,

With all his Normans round him once
again,

Counts his old beads, and hath forgotten
thee.

Harold. Thou art of my blood, and
so methinks, my boy,

Thy fears infect me beyond reason.
Peace!

Wulfnoth. And then our fiery Tostig,
while thy hands

Are palsied here, if his Northumbrians
rise

And hurl him from them,—I have heard
the Normans

Count upon this confusion—may he not
make

A league with William, so to bring him
back?

Harold. That lies within the shadow
of the chance.

Wulfnoth. And like a river in flood
thro’ a burst dam

Descends the ruthless Norman—our good
King

Kneels mumbling some old bone—our
helpless folk

Are wash’d away, wailing, in their own
blood—

Harold. Wailing! not warring? Boy,
thou hast forgotten
That thou art English.

Wulfnoth. Then our modest women—
I know the Norman license—thine own
Edith—

Harold. No more! I will not hear
thee—William comes.

Wulfnoth. I dare not well be seen in
talk with thee.

Make thou not mention that I spake with
thee.

[*Moves away to the back of the stage.*]

Enter WILLIAM, MALET, and Officer

Officer. We have the man that rail'd
against thy birth.

William. Tear out his tongue.

Officer. He shall not rail again.
He said that he should see confusion fall
On thee and on thine house.

William. Tear out his eyes,
And plunge him into prison.

Officer. It shall be done.

[*Exit Officer.*]

William. Look not amazed, fair earl!
Better leave undone

Than do by halves—tongueless and eye-
less, prison'd—

Harold. Better methinks have slain
the man at once!

William. We have respect for man's
immortal soul,

We seldom take man's life, except in war;
It frights the traitor more to maim and
blind.

Harold. In mine own land I should
have scorn'd the man,

Or lash'd his rascal back, and let him go.

William. And let him go? To slander
thee again!

Yet in thine own land in thy father's day
They blinded my young kinsman, Alfred
—ay,

Some said it was thy father's deed.

Harold. They lied.

William. But thou and he—whom at
thy word, for thou

Art known a speaker of the truth, I free
From this foul charge—

Harold. Nay, nay, he freed himself
By oath and compurgation from the
charge.

The king, the lords, the people clear'd
him of it.

William. But thou and he drove our
good Normans out

From England, and this rankles in us yet.
Archbishop Robert hardly scaped with life.

Harold. Archbishop Robert! Robert
the Archbishop!

Robert of Jumiéges, he that—

Malet. Quiet! quiet!

Harold. Count! if there sat within
the Norman chair

A ruler all for England—one who fill'd
All offices, all bishopricks with English—

We could not move from Dover to the
Humber

Saving thro' Norman bishopricks—I say
Ye would applaud that Norman who
should drive

The stranger to the fiends!

William. Why, that is reason!
Warrior thou art, and mighty wise withal!
Ay, ay, but many among our Norman
lords

Hate thee for this, and press upon me—
saying

God and the sea have given thee to our
hands—

To plunge thee into life-long prison
here:—

Yet I hold out against them, as I may,
Yea—would hold out, yea, tho' they
should revolt—

For thou hast done the battle in my cause;
I am thy fastest friend in Normandy.

Harold. I am doubly bound to thee
. . . if this be so.

William. And I would bind thee
more, and would myself

Be bounden to thee more.

Harold. Then let me hence
With Wulfnoth to King Edward.

William. So we will.

We hear he hath not long to live.

Harold. It may be.

William. Why then the heir of
England, who is he?

Harold. The Atheling is nearest to the throne.

William. But sickly, slight, half-witted and a child.

Will England have him king?

Harold. It may be, no.

William. And hath King Edward not pronounced his heir?

Harold. Not that I know.

William. When he was here in Normandy,

He loved us and we him, because we found him

A Norman of the Normans.

Harold. So did we.

William. A gentle, gracious, pure and saintly man!

And grateful to the hand that shielded him,
He promised that if ever he were king
In England, he would give his kingly voice
To me as his successor. Knowest thou this?

Harold. I learn it now.

William. Thou knowest I am his cousin,

And that my wife descends from Alfred?

Harold. Ay.

William. Who hath a better claim then to the crown

So that ye will not crown the Atheling?

Harold. None that I know . . . if that but hung upon

King Edward's will.

William. Wilt thou uphold my claim?

Malet (aside to Harold). Be careful of thine answer, my good friend.

Wulfnoth (aside to Harold). Oh! Harold, for my sake and for thine own!

Harold. Ay . . . if the king have not revoked his promise.

William. But hath he done it then?

Harold. Not that I know.

William. Good, good, and thou wilt help me to the crown?

Harold. Ay . . . if the Witan will consent to this.

William. Thou art the mightiest voice in England, man,

Thy voice will lead the Witan—shall I have it?

Wulfnoth (aside to Harold). Oh!

Harold, if thou love thine Edith, ay.

Harold. Ay, if—

Malet (aside to Harold). Thine 'ifs' will sear thine eyes out—ay.

William. I ask thee, wilt thou help me to the crown?

And I will make thee my great Earl of Earls,

Foremost in England and in Normandy;
Thou shalt be verily king—all but the name—

For I shall most sojourn in Normandy;
And thou be my vice-king in England.
Speak.

Wulfnoth (aside to Harold). Ay, brother—for the sake of England—ay.

Harold. My lord—

Malet (aside to Harold). Take heed now.

Harold. Ay.

William. I am content,

For thou art truthful, and thy word thy bond.

To-morrow will we ride with thee to Harfleur. [*Exit William.*]

Malet. Harold, I am thy friend, one life with thee,

And even as I should bless thee saving mine,

I thank thee now for having saved thyself. [*Exit Malet.*]

Harold. For having lost myself to save myself,

Said 'ay' when I meant 'no,' lied like a lad

That dreads the pendent scourge, said 'ay' for 'no'!

Ay! No!—he hath not bound me by an oath—

Is 'ay' an oath? is 'ay' strong as an oath?

Or is it the same sin to break my word
As break mine oath? He call'd my word my bond!

He is a liar who knows I am a liar,

And makes believe that he believes my word—

The crime be on his head—not bounden—no.

[Suddenly doors are flung open, discovering in an inner hall COUNT WILLIAM in his state robes, seated upon his throne, between two Bishops, ODO OF BAYEUX being one: in the centre of the hall an ark covered with cloth of gold; and on either side of it the Norman barons.]

Enter a JAILOR before William's throne

William (to Jailor). Knave, hast thou let thy prisoner scape?

Jailor. Sir Count, He had but one foot, he must have hopt away,
Yea, some familiar spirit must have help'd him.

William. Woe knave to thy familiar and to thee!

Give me thy keys. *[They fall clashing.]*
Nay let them lie. Stand there and wait my will.

[The Jailor stands aside.]

William (to Harold). Hast thou such trustless jailors in thy North?

Harold. We have few prisoners in mine earldom there,
So less chance for false keepers.

William. We have heard Of thy just, mild, and equal governance;
Honour to thee! thou art perfect in all honour!

Thy naked word thy bond! confirm it now

Before our gather'd Norman baronage,
For they will not believe thee—as I believe.

[Descends from his throne and stands by the ark.]

Let all men here bear witness of our bond!
[Beckons to Harold, who advances.]

Enter MALET behind him

Lay thou thy hand upon this golden pall!
Behold the jewel of St. Pancratius

Woven into the gold. Swear thou on this!

Harold. What should I swear? Why should I swear on this?

William (savagely). Swear thou to help me to the crown of England.

Malet (whispering Harold). My friend, thou hast gone too far to palter now.

Wulfnoth (whispering Harold). Swear thou to-day, to-morrow is thine own.

Harold. I swear to help thee to the crown of England . . .

According as King Edward promises.

William. Thou must swear absolutely, noble Earl.

Malet (whispering). Delay is death to thee, ruin to England.

Wulfnoth (whispering). Swear, dearest brother, I beseech thee, swear!

Harold (putting his hand on the jewel).
I swear to help thee to the crown of England.

William. Thanks, truthful Earl; I did not doubt thy word,

But that my barons might believe thy word,

And that the Holy Saints of Normandy
When thou art home in England, with thine own,

Might strengthen thee in keeping of thy word,

I made thee swear.—Show him by whom he hath sworn.

[The two Bishops advance, and raise the cloth of gold. The bodies and bones of Saints are seen lying in the ark.]

The holy bones of all the Canonised
From all the holiest shrines in Normandy!

Harold. Horrible!

[They let the cloth fall again.]

William. Ay, for thou hast sworn an oath

Which, if not kept, would make the hard earth rive

To the very Devil's horns, the bright sky cleave

To the very feet of God, and send her hosts

Of injured Saints to scatter sparks of
 plague
 Thro' all your cities, blast your infants,
 dash
 The torch of war among your standing
 corn,
 Dabble your hearths with your own blood.
 —Enough!

Thou wilt not break it! I, the Count—
 the King—

Thy friend—am grateful for thine honest
 oath,

Not coming fiercely like a conqueror, now,
 But softly as a bridegroom to his own.
 For I shall rule according to your laws,
 And make your ever-jarring Earldoms
 move

To music and in order—Angle, Jute,
 Dane, Saxon, Norman, help to build a
 throne

Out-towering hers of France . . . The
 wind is fair

For England now . . . To-night we will
 be merry.

To-morrow will I ride with thee to
 Harfleur.

[*Exeunt William and all the Norman
 barons, etc.*]

Harold. To-night we will be merry—
 and to-morrow—

Juggler and bastard—bastard—he hates
 that most—

William the tanner's bastard! Would
 he heard me!

O God, that I were in some wide, waste
 field

With nothing but my battle-axe and
 him

To spatter his brains! Why let earth
 rive, gulf in

These cursed Normans—yea and mine
 own self.

Cleave heaven, and send thy saints that
 I may say

Ev'n to their faces, 'If ye side with
 William

Ye are not noble.' How their pointed
 fingers

Glared at me! Am I Harold, Harold,
 son

Of our great Godwin? Lo! I touch
 mine arms,

My limbs—they are not mine—they are
 a liar's—

I mean to be a liar—I am not bound—
 Stigand shall give me absolution for it—

Did the chest move? did it move? I am
 utter craven!

O Wulfnoth, Wulfnoth, brother, thou
 hast betray'd me!

Wulfnoth. Forgive me, brother, I
 will live here and die.

Enter PAGE

Page. My lord! the Duke awaits thee
 at the banquet.

Harold. Where they eat dead men's
 flesh, and drink their blood.

Page. My lord—

Harold. I know your Norman cookery
 is so spiced,

It masks all this.

Page. My lord! thou art white
 as death.

Harold. With looking on the dead.
 Am I so white?

Thy Duke will seem the darker. Hence,
 I follow. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III

SCENE I.—THE KING'S PALACE. LONDON

KING EDWARD *dying on a couch, and by
 him standing the QUEEN, HAROLD,
 ARCHBISHOP STIGAND, GURTH,
 LEOFWIN, ARCHBISHOP ALDRED,
 ALDWYTH, and EDITH.*

Stigand. Sleeping or dying there?
 If this be death,

Then our great Council wait to crown
 thee King—

Come hither, I have a power;

[*To Harold.*]

They call me near, for I am close to thee.
 And England—I, old shrivell'd Stigand, I,
 Dry as an old wood-fungus on a dead tree,
 I have a power!

See here this little key about my neck !
There lies a treasure buried down in Ely :
If e'er the Norman grow too hard for
thee,

Ask me for this at thy most need, son
Harold,

At thy most need—not sooner.

Harold. So I will.

Stigand. Red gold—a hundred purses
—yea, and more !

If thou canst make a wholesome use of
these

To chink against the Norman, I do
believe

My old crook'd spine would bud out two
young wings

To fly to heaven straight with.

Harold. Thank thee, father !
Thou art English, Edward too is English
now,

He hath clean repented of his Normanism.

Stigand. Ay, as the libertine repents
who cannot

Make done undone, when thro' his dying
sense

Shrills 'lost thro' thee.' They have
built their castles here ;

Our priories are Norman ; the Norman
adder

Hath bitten us ; we are poison'd : our
dear England

Is demi-Norman. He !—

[*Pointing to King Edward, sleeping.*]

Harold. I would I were
As holy and as passionless as he !

That I might rest as calmly ! Look at
him—

The rosy face, and long down-silvering
beard,

The brows unwrinkled as a summer
mere.—

Stigand. A summer mere with sudden
wreckful gusts

From a side-gorge. Passionless ? How
he flamed

When Tostig's anger'd earldom flung
him, nay,

He fain had calcined all Northumbria
To one black ash, but that thy patriot
passion

Siding with our great Council against
Tostig,

Out-passion'd his ! Holy ? ay, ay, for-
sooth,

A conscience for his own soul, not his
realm ;

A twilight conscience lighted thro' a
chink ;

Thine by the sun ; nay, by some sun to be,
When all the world hath learnt to speak
the truth,

And lying were self-murder by that state
Which was the exception.

Harold. That sun may God speed !

Stigand. Come, Harold, shake the
cloud off !

Harold. Can I, father ?

Our Tostig parted cursing me and Eng-
land ;

Our sister hates us for his banishment ;

He hath gone to kindle Norway against
England,

And Wulfnoth is alone in Normandy.

For when I rode with William down to
Harfleur,

'Wulfnoth is sick,' he said ; 'he cannot
follow' ;

Then with that friendly-fiendly smile of
his,

'We have learnt to love him, let him a
little longer

Remain a hostage for the loyalty

Of Godwin's house.' As far as touches
Wulfnoth

I that so prized plain word and naked
truth

Have sinn'd against it—all in vain.

Leofwin. Good brother,

By all the truths that ever priest hath
preach'd,

Of all the lies that ever men have lied,

Thine is the pardonablest.

Harold. May be so !

I think it so, I think I am a fool

To think it can be otherwise than so.

Stigand. Tut, tut, I have absolved
thee : dost thou scorn me,

Because I had my Canterbury pallium,
From one whom they disposed ?

Harold. No, Stigand, no !

Stigand. Is naked truth actable in true life?

I have heard a saying of thy father Godwin,
That, were a man of state nakedly true,
Men would but take him for the craftier liar.

Leofwin. Be men less delicate than the Devil himself?
I thought that naked Truth would shame the Devil

The Devil is so modest.

Gurth. He never said it!

Leofwin. Be thou not stupid-honest, brother Gurth!

Harold. Better to be a liar's dog, and hold

My master honest, than believe that lying
And ruling men are fatal twins that cannot

Move one without the other. Edward wakes!—

Dazed—he hath seen a vision.

Edward. The green tree!
Then a great Angel past along the highest
Crying 'the doom of England,' and at once

He stood beside me, in his grasp a sword
Of lightnings, wherewithal he cleft the tree
From off the bearing trunk, and hurl'd it from him

Three fields away, and then he dash'd and drench'd,

He dyed, he soak'd the trunk with human blood,

And brought the sunder'd tree again, and set it

Straight on the trunk, that thus baptized in blood

Grew ever high and higher, beyond my seeing,

And shot out sidelong boughs across the deep

That dropt themselves, and rooted in far isles

Beyond my seeing: and the great Angel rose

And past again along the highest crying
'The doom of England!'—Tostig, raise my head! [*Falls back senseless.*]

Harold (raising him). Let Harold serve for Tostig!

Queen. Harold served Tostig so ill, he cannot serve for Tostig! Ay, raise his head, for thou hast laid it low! The sickness of our saintly king, for whom

My prayers go up as fast as my tears fall, I well believe, hath mainly drawn itself From lack of Tostig—thou hast banish'd him.

Harold. Nay—but the council, and the king himself.

Queen. Thou hatest him, hatest him.

Harold (coldly). Ay—Stigand, unriddle

This vision, canst thou?

Stigand. Dotage!

Edward (starting up). It is finish'd.
I have built the Lord a house—the Lord hath dwelt

In darkness. I have built the Lord a house—

Palms, flowers, pomegranates, golden cherubim

With twenty-cubit wings from wall to wall—

I have built the Lord a house—sing, Asaph! clash

The cymbal, Heman! blow the trumpet, priest!

Fall, cloud, and fill the house—lo! my two pillars,

Jachin and Boaz!—

[*Seeing Harold and Gurth.*]

Harold, Gurth,—where am I? Where is the charter of our Westminster?

Stigand. It lies beside thee, king, upon thy bed.

Edward. Sign, sign at once—take, sign it, Stigand, Aldred!

Sign it, my good son Harold, Gurth, and Leofwin,

Sign it, my queen!

All. We have sign'd it.

Edward. It is finish'd!
The kingliest Abbey in all Christian lands,

The lordliest, loftiest minster ever built
To Holy Peter in our English isle!

Let me be buried there, and all our kings,
And all our just and wise and holy men
That shall be born hereafter. It is
finish'd !

Hast thou had absolution for thine oath ?
[To Harold.

Harold. Stigand hath given me absolution for it.

Edward. Stigand is not canonical enough

To save thee from the wrath of Norman Saints.

Stigand. Norman enough ! Be there no Saints of England

To help us from their brethren yonder ?

Edward. Prelate,

The Saints are one, but those of Normanland

Are mightier than our own. Ask it of Aldred. [To Harold.

Aldred. It shall be granted him, my king ; for he

Who vows a vow to strangle his own mother

Is guiltier keeping this, than breaking it.

Edward. O friends, I shall not overlive the day.

Stigand. Why then the throne is empty. Who inherits ?

Fortho' we be not bound by the king's voice
In making of a king, yet the king's voice
Is much toward his making. Who inherits ?

Edgar the Atheling ?

Edward. No, no, but Harold.

I love him : he hath served me : none but he

Can rule all England. Yet the curse is on him

For swearing falsely by those blessed bones ;

He did not mean to keep his vow.

Harold. Not mean

To make our England Norman.

Edward. There spake Godwin,

Who hated all the Normans ; but their Saints

Have heard thee, Harold.

Edith. Oh ! my lord, my king !

He knew not whom he sware by.

Edward.

Yea, I know

He knew not, but those heavenly ears have heard,

Their curse is on him ; wilt thou bring another,

Edith, upon his head ?

Edith.

No, no, not I.

Edward. Why then, thou must not wed him.

Harold. Wherefore, wherefore ?

Edward. O son, when thou didst tell me of thine oath,

I sorrow'd for my random promise given
To yon fox-lion. I did not dream then
I should be king.—My son, the Saints are virgins ;

They love the white rose of virginity,
The cold, white lily blowing in her cell :
I have been myself a virgin ; and I swear
To consecrate my virgin here to heaven—
The silent, cloister'd, solitary life,
A life of life-long prayer against the curse
That lies on thee and England.

Harold.

No, no, no.

Edward. Treble denial of the tongue of flesh,

Like Peter's when he fell, and thou wilt have

To wait for it like Peter. O my son !

Are all oaths to be broken then, all promises

Made in our agony for help from heaven ?
Son, there is one who loves thee : and a wife,

What matters who, so she be serviceable
In all obedience, as mine own hath been :
God bless thee, wedded daughter.

[Laying his hand on the Queen's head.

Queen.

Bless thou too

That brother whom I love beyond the rest,
My banish'd Tostig.

Edward.

All the sweet Saints

bless him !

Spare and forbear him, Harold, if he comes !

And let him pass unscathed ; he loves me, Harold !

Be kindly to the Normans left among us,
Who follow'd me for love ! and dear son,
swear

When thou art king, to see my solemn
vow
Accomplish'd.

Harold. Nay, dear lord, for I have
sworn

Not to swear falsely twice.

Edward. Thou wilt not swear?

Harold. I cannot.

Edward. Then on thee remains
the curse,

Harold, if thou embrace her : and on thee,
Edith, if thou abide it,—

[*The King swoons ; Edith falls and
kneels by the couch.*]

Stigand. He hath swoon'd !
Death ? . . . no, as yet a breath.

Harold. Look up ! look up !
Edith !

Aldred. Confuse her not ; she hath
begun

Her life-long prayer for thee.

Aldwyth. O noble Harold,
I would thou couldst have sworn.

Harold. For thine own pleasure?

Aldwyth. No, but to please our dying
king, and those

Who make thy good their own—all
England, Earl.

Aldred. I would thou couldst have
sworn. Our holy king

Hath given his virgin lamb to Holy
Church

To save thee from the curse.

Harold. Alas ! poor man,
His promise brought it on me.

Aldred. O good son !
That knowledge made him all the care-
fuller

To find a means whereby the curse might
glance

From thee and England.

Harold. Father, we so loved—

Aldred. The more the love, the
mightier is the prayer ;

The more the love, the more acceptable
The sacrifice of both your loves to heaven.

No sacrifice to heaven, no help from
heaven ;

That runs thro' all the faiths of all the
world.

And sacrifice there must be, for the king
Is holy, and hath talk'd with God, and
seen

A shadowing horror ; there are signs in
heaven—

Harold. Your comet came and went.

Aldred. And signs on earth !

Knowest thou Senlac hill?

Harold. I know all Sussex ;
A good entrenchment for a perilous hour !

Aldred. Pray God that come not
suddenly ! There is one

Who passing by that hill three nights
ago—

He shook so that he scarce could out
with it—

Heard, heard—

Harold. The wind in his hair ?

Aldred. A ghostly horn
Blowing continually, and faint battle-
hymns,

And cries, and clashes, and the groans of
men ;

And dreadful shadows strove upon the
hill,

And dreadful lights crept up from out
the marsh—

Corpse-candles gliding over nameless
graves—

Harold. At Senlac ?

Aldred. Senlac.

Edward (*waking*). Senlac ! Sanguelac,
The Lake of Blood !

Stigand. This lightning before death
Plays on the word,—and Normanizes too !

Harold. Hush, father, hush !

Edward. Thou uncanonical fool,
Wilt thou play with the thunder ? North
and South

Thunder together, showers of blood are
blown

Before a never-ending blast, and hiss
Against the blaze they cannot quench—a
lake,

A sea of blood—we are drown'd in blood
—for God

Has fill'd the quiver, and Death has
drawn the bow—

Sanguelac ! Sanguelac ! the arrow ! the
arrow !

[*Dies.*]

Stigand. It is the arrow of death in
his own heart—
And our great Council wait to crown thee
King.

SCENE II.—IN THE GARDEN. THE
KING'S HOUSE NEAR LONDON

Edith. Crown'd, crown'd and lost,
crown'd King—and lost to me !

(*Singing*)

Two young lovers in winter weather,
None to guide them,
Walk'd at night on the misty heather ;
Night, as black as a raven's feather ;
Both were lost and found together,
None beside them.

That is the burthen of it—lost and found
Together in the cruel river Swale
A hundred years ago ; and there's another,

Lost, lost, the light of day,

To which the lover answers lovingly

'I am beside thee.'

Lost, lost, we have lost the way.

'Love, I will guide thee.'

Whither, O whither ? into the river,
Where we two may be lost together,
And lost for ever ? 'Oh ! never,
oh ! never,

Tho' we be lost and befound together.'

Some think they loved within the pale
forbidden

By Holy Church : but who shall say ?
the truth

Was lost in that fierce North, where *they*
were lost,

Where all good things are lost, where
Tostig lost

The good hearts of his people. It is
Harold !

Enter HAROLD

Harold the King !

Harold. Call me not King, but

Harold.

Edith. Nay, thou art King !

Harold. Thine, thine, or King
or churl !

My girl, thou hast been weeping : turn
not thou

Thy face away, but rather let me be
King of the moment to thee, and command
That kiss my due when subject, which
will make

My kingship kinglier to me than to reign
King of the world without it.

Edith. Ask me not,

Lest I should yield it, and the second
curse

Descend upon thine head, and thou be
only

King of the moment over England.

Harold. Edith,

Tho' somewhat less a king to my true self
Than ere they crown'd me one, for I have
lost

Somewhat of upright stature thro' mine
oath,

Yet thee I would not lose, and sell not
thou

Our living passion for a dead man's dream ;
Stigand believed he knew not what he
spake.

Oh God ! I cannot help it, but at times
They seem to me too narrow, all the faiths
Of this grown world of ours, whose baby
eye

Saw them sufficient. Fool and wise, I fear
This curse, and scorn it. But a little
light !—

And on it falls the shadow of the priest ;
Heaven yield us more ! for better,
Woden, all

Our cancell'd warrior-gods, our grim
Walhalla,

Eternal war, than that the Saints at peace
The Holiest of our Holiest one should be
This William's fellow-tricksters ;—better
die

Than credit this, for death is death, or else
Lifts us beyond the lie. Kiss me—thou
art not

A holy sister yet, my girl, to fear
There might be more than brother in my
kiss,

And more than sister in thine own.

Edith. I dare not.
Harold. Scared by the church—
 'Love for a whole life long'
 When was that sung?
Edith. Here to the nightingales.
Harold. Their anthems of no church,
 how sweet they are!
 Nor kingly priest, nor priestly king to
 cross
 Their billings ere they nest.
Edith. They are but of spring,
 They fly the winter change—not so with
 us—
 No wings to come and go.
Harold. But wing'd souls flying
 Beyond all change and in the eternal
 distance
 To settle on the Truth.
Edith. They are not so true,
 They change their mates.
Harold. Do they? I did not know it.
Edith. They say thou art to wed the
 Lady Aldwyth.
Harold. They say, they say.
Edith. If this be politic,
 And well for thee and England—and for
 her—
 Care not for me who love thee.
Gurth (calling). Harold, Harold!
Harold. The voice of Gurth! (*Enter*
GURTH.) Good even, my good
 brother!
Gurth. Good even, gentle Edith.
Edith. Good even, Gurth.
Gurth. Ill news hath come! Our
 hapless brother, Tostig—
 He, and the giant King of Norway,
 Harold
 Hardrada—Scotland, Ireland, Iceland,
 Orkney,
 Are landed North of Humber, and in a
 field
 So packt with carnage that the dykes and
 brooks
 Were bridged and damm'd with dead,
 have overthrown
 Morcar and Edwin.
Harold. Well then, we must
 fight.
 How blows the wind?

Gurth. Against St. Valery
 And William.
Harold. Well then, we will to the
 North.
Gurth. Ay, but worse news: this
 William sent to Rome,
 Swearing thou swarest falsely by his
 Saints:
 The Pope and that Archdeacon Hilde-
 brand
 His master, heard him, and have sent him
 back
 A holy gonfanon, and a blessed hair
 Of Peter, and all France, all Burgundy,
 Poitou, all Christendom is raised against
 thee;
 He hath cursed thee, and all those who
 fight for thee,
 And given thy realm of England to the
 bastard.
Harold. Ha! ha!
Edith. Oh! laugh not! . . . Strange
 and ghastly in the gloom
 And shadowing of this double thunder-
 cloud
 That lours on England—laughter!
Harold. No, not strange!
 This was old human laughter in old
 Rome
 Before a Pope was born, when that which
 reign'd
 Call'd itself God.—A kindly rendering
 Of 'Render unto Cæsar.' . . . The
 Good Shepherd!
 Take this, and render that.
Gurth. They have taken York.
Harold. The Lord was God and came
 as man—the Pope
 Is man and comes as God.—York taken?
Gurth. Yea,
 Tostig hath taken York!
Harold. To York then. Edith,
 Hadst thou been braver, I had better
 braved
 All—but I love thee and thou me—and
 that
 Remains beyond all chances and all
 churches,
 And that thou knowest.
Edith. Ay, but take back thy ring.

It burns my hand—a curse to thee and me.
I dare not wear it.

[*Proffers Harold the ring, which he takes.*

Harold. But I dare. God with thee !

[*Exeunt Harold and Gurth.*

Edith. The King hath cursed him, if
he marry me ;

The Pope hath cursed him, marry me or
no !

God help me ! I know nothing—can but
pray

For Harold—pray, pray, pray—no help
but prayer,

A breath that fleets beyond this iron world,
And touches Him that made it.

ACT IV

SCENE I.—IN NORTHUMBRIA

ARCHBISHOP ALDRED, MORCAR, EDWIN,
and Forces. *Enter HAROLD. The
standard of the golden Dragon of
Wessex preceding him.*

Harold. What ! are thy people sullen
from defeat ?

Our Wessex dragon flies beyond the
Humber,
No voice to greet it.

Edwin. Let not our great king
Believe us sullen—only shamed to the
quick

Before the king—as having been so bruised
By Harold, king of Norway ; but our help
Is Harold, king of England. Pardon us,
thou !

Our silence is our reverence for the king !

Harold. Earl of the Mercians ! if the
truth be gall,

Cram me not thou with honey, when our
good hive

Needs every sting to save it.

Voices. Aldwyth ! Aldwyth !

Harold. Why cry thy people on thy
sister's name ?

Morcar. She hath won upon our
people thro' her beauty,
And pleasantness among them.

Voices. Aldwyth, Aldwyth !

Harold. They shout as they would
have her for a queen.

Morcar. She hath followed with our
host, and suffer'd all.

Harold. What would ye, men ?

Voice. Our old Northumbrian
crown,

And kings of our own choosing.

Harold. Your old crown

Were little help without our Saxon carles
Against Hardrada.

Voice. Little ! we are Danes,
Who conquer'd what we walk on, our
own field.

Harold. They have been plotting here !
[*Aside.*

Voice. He calls us little !

Harold. The kingdoms of this world
began with little,

A hill, a fort, a city—that reach'd a hand
Down to the field beneath it, ' Be thou
mine,'

Then to the next, ' Thou also ! ' If the
field

Cried out ' I am mine own ' ; another hill
Or fort, or city, took it, and the first
Fell, and the next became an Empire.

Voice. Yet

Thou art but a West Saxon : we are Danes !

Harold. My mother is a Dane, and I
am English ;

There is a pleasant fable in old books,
Ye take a stick, and break it ; bind a score
All in one faggot, snap it over knee,

Ye cannot.

Voice. Hear King Harold ! he
says true !

Harold. Would ye be Norsemen ?

Voices. No !

Harold. Or Norman ?

Voices. No !

Harold. Snapnot the faggot-band then.

Voice. That is true !

Voice. Ay, but thou art not kingly,
only grandson

To Wulfnoth, a poor cow-herd.

Harold. This old Wulfnoth

Would take me on his knees and tell me
tales

Of Alfred and of Athelstan the Great

Who drove you Danes ; and yet he held
that Dane,
Jute, Angle, Saxon, were or should be
all
One England, for this cow-herd, like my
father,
Who shook the Norman scoundrels off
the throne,
Had in him kingly thoughts—a king of
men,
Not made but born, like the great king
of all,
A light among the oxen.

Voice. That is true !

Voice. Ay, and I love him now, for
mine own father
Was great, and cobbled.

Voice. Thou art Tostig's brother,
Who wastes the land.

Harold. This brother comes to save
Your land from waste ; I saved it once
before,

For when your people banish'd Tostig
hence,

And Edward would have sent a host
against you,

Then I, who loved my brother, bad the
king

Who doted on him, sanction your decree
Of Tostig's banishment, and choice of
Morcar,

To help the realm from scattering.

Voice. King ! thy brother,
If one may dare to speak the truth, was
wrong'd.

Wild was he, born so : but the plots
against him

Had madden'd tamer men.

Morcar. Thou art one of those
Who brake into Lord Tostig's treasure-
house

And slew two hundred of his following,
And now, when Tostig hath come back
with power,

Are frighted back to Tostig.

Old Thane. Ugh ! Plots and feuds !
This is my ninetieth birthday. Can ye
not

Be brethren ? Godwin still at feud with
Alfgar,

And Alfgar hates King Harold. Plots
and feuds !

This is my ninetieth birthday !

Harold. Old man, Harold
Hates nothing ; not *his* fault, if our two
houses

Be less than brothers.

Voices. Aldwyth, Harold, Aldwyth !

Harold. Again ! Morcar ! Edwin !
What do they mean ?

Edwin. So the good king would deign
to lend an ear

Not overscornful, we might chance—per-
chance—

To guess their meaning.

Morcar. Thine own meaning, Harold,
To make all England one, to close all feuds,
Mixing our bloods, that thence a king
may rise

Half-Godwin and half-Alfgar, one to rule
All England beyond question, beyond
quarrel.

Harold. Who sow'd this fancy here
among the people ?

Morcar. Who knows what sows itself
among the people ?

A goodly flower at times.

Harold. The Queen of Wales ?
Why, Morcar, it is all but duty in her
To hate me ; I have heard she hates me.

Morcar. No !

For I can swear to that, but cannot swear
That these will follow thee against the
Norsemen,

If thou deny them this.

Harold. Morcar and Edwin,
When will ye cease to plot against my
house ?

Edwin. The king can scarcely dream
that we, who know

His prowess in the mountains of the West,
Should care to plot against him in the
North.

Morcar. Who dares arraign us, king,
of such a plot ?

Harold. Ye heard one witness even now.

Morcar. The craven !
There is a faction risen again for Tostig,
Since Tostig came with Norway—fright
not love.

Harold. Morcar and Edwin, will ye,
if I yield,
Follow against the Norseman?

Morcar. Surely, surely!

Harold. Morcar and Edwin, will ye
upon oath,
Help us against the Norman?

Morcar. With good will;
Yea, take the Sacrament upon it, king.

Harold. Where is thy sister?

Morcar. Somewhere hard at hand.
Call and she comes.

[*One goes out, then enter Aldwyth.*]

Harold. I doubt not but thou knowest
Why thou art summon'd.

Aldwyth. Why?—I stay with these,
Lest thy fierce Tostig spy me out alone,
And flay me all alive.

Harold. Canst thou love one
Who did discrown thine husband, unqueen
thee?

Didst thou not love thine husband?

Aldwyth. Oh! my lord,
The nimble, wild, red, wiry, savage
king—

That was, my lord, a match of policy.

Harold. Was it?
I knew him brave: he loved his land:
he fain

Had made her great: his finger on her
harp

(I heard him more than once) had in it
Wales,

Her floods, her woods, her hills: had I
been his,

I had been all Welsh.

Aldwyth. Oh, ay—all Welsh—and yet
I saw thee drive him up his hills—and
women

Cling to the conquer'd, if they love, the
more;

If not, they cannot hate the conqueror.

We never—oh! good Morcar, speak for
us,

His conqueror conquer'd Aldwyth.

Harold. Goodly news!

Morcar. Doubt it not thou! Since
Griffyth's head was sent

To Edward, she hath said it.

Harold. I had rather

She would have loved her husband.

Aldwyth, Aldwyth,

Canst thou love me, thou knowing where
I love?

Aldwyth. I can, my lord, for mine
own sake, for thine,

For England, for thy poor white dove,
who flutters

Between thee and the porch, but then
would find

Her nest within the cloister, and be still.

Harold. Canst thou love one, who
cannot love again?

Aldwyth. Full hope have I that love
will answer love.

Harold. Then in the name of the
great God, so be it!

Come, Aldred, join our hands before the
hosts,

That all may see.

[*Aldred joins the hands of Harold
and Aldwyth and blesses them.*]

Voices. Harold, Harold and Aldwyth!

Harold. Set forth our golden Dragon,
let him flap

The wings that beat down Wales!

Advance our Standard of the Warrior,

Dark among gems and gold; and thou,
brave banner,

Blaze like a night of fatal stars on those
Who read their doom and die.

Where lie the Norsemen? on the Der-
went? ay

At Stamford-bridge.

Morcar, collect thy men; Edwin, my
friend—

Thou lingerest.—Gurth,—

Last night King Edward came to me in
dreams—

The rosy face and long down-silvering
beard—

He told me I should conquer:—

I am no woman to put faith in dreams.

(*To his army*)

Last night King Edward came to me in
dreams,

And told me we should conquer.

Voices. Forward! Forward!

Harold and Holy Cross!

Aldwyth. The day is won!

SCENE II.—A PLAIN. BEFORE THE
BATTLE OF STAMFORD-BRIDGE

HAROLD *and his Guard*

Harold. Who is it comes this way?

Tostig? (*Enter TOSTIG with a small force.*) O brother,

What art thou doing here?

Tostig. I am foraging

For Norway's army.

Harold. I could take and slay thee.

Thou art in arms against us.

Tostig. Take and slay me,

For Edward loved me.

Harold. Edward bad me spare thee.

Tostig. I hate King Edward, for he
join'd with thee

To drive me outlaw'd. Take and slay
me, I say,

Or I shall count thee fool.

Harold. Take thee, or free thee,

Free thee or slay thee, Norway will have
war;

No man would strike with Tostig, save
for Norway.

Thou art nothing in thine England, save
for Norway,

Who loves not thee but war. What dost
thou here,

Trampling thy mother's bosom into blood?

Tostig. She hath wean'd me from it
with such bitterness.

I come for mine own Earldom, my
Northumbria;

Thou hast given it to the enemy of our
house.

Harold. Northumbria threw thee off,
she will not have thee,

Thou hast misused her: and, O crowning
crime!

Hast murder'd thine own guest, the son
of Orm,

Gamel, at thine own hearth.

Tostig. The slow, fat fool!

He drawl'd and prated so, I smote him
suddenly,

I knew not what I did. He held with
Morcar.—

I hate myself for all things that I do.

Harold. And Morcar holds with us.

Come back with him.

Know what thou dost; and we may find
for thee,

So thou be chasten'd by thy banishment,
Some easier earldom.

Tostig. What for Norway then?

He looks for land among us, he and his.

Harold. Seven feet of English land,
or something more,

Seeing he is a giant.

Tostig. That is noble!

That sounds of Godwin.

Harold. Come thou back, and be
Once more a son of Godwin.

Tostig (turns away). O brother,
brother,

O Harold—

Harold (laying his hand on Tostig's shoulder). Nay then, come thou
back to us!

Tostig (after a pause turning to him).

Never shall any man say that I,
that Tostig

Conjured the mightier Harold from his
North

To do the battle for me here in England,
Then left him for the meaner! thee!—

Thou hast no passion for the House of
Godwin—

Thou hast but cared to make thyself a
king—

Thou hast sold me for a cry.—

Thou gavest thy voice against me in the
Council—

I hate thee, and despise thee, and defy
thee.

Farewell for ever!

[*Exit.*

Harold. On to Stamford-bridge!

SCENE III

AFTER THE BATTLE OF STAMFORD-
BRIDGE. BANQUET

HAROLD *and* ALDWYTH. GURTH,
LEOFWIN, MORCAR, EDWIN, *and*
other Earls and Thanes.

Voices. Hail! Harold! Aldwyth!
hail, bridegroom and bride!

Aldwyth (talking with Harold). Answer them thou !

Is this our marriage-banquet ? Would the wines

Of wedding had been dash'd into the cups
Of victory, and our marriage and thy glory
Been drunk together ! these poor hands
but sew,

Spin, broider—would that they were
man's to have held

The battle-axe by thee !

Harold. There *was* a moment
When being forced aloof from all my
guard,

And striking at Hardrada and his mad-
men

I had wish'd for any weapon.

Aldwyth. Why art thou sad ?

Harold. I have lost the boy who
play'd at ball with me,
With whom I fought another fight than
this

Of Stamford-bridge.

Aldwyth. Ay ! ay ! thy victories
Over our own poor Wales, when at thy
side

He conquer'd with thee.

Harold. No—the childish fist
That cannot strike again.

Aldwyth. Thou art too kindly.
Why didst thou let so many Norsemen
hence ?

Thy fierce forekings had clench'd their
pirate hides

To the bleak church doors, like kites
upon a barn.

Harold. Is there so great a need to
tell thee why ?

Aldwyth. Yea, am I not thy wife ?

Voices. Hail, Harold, Aldwyth !
Bridegroom and bride !

Aldwyth. Answer them ! [*To Harold.*

Harold (to all). Earls and Thanes !
Full thanks for your fair greeting of my
bride !

Earls, Thanes, and all our countrymen !
the day,

Our day beside the Derwent will not shine
Less than a star among the goldenest hours
Of Alfred, or of Edward his great son,

Or Athelstan, or English Ironside
Who fought with Knut, or Knut who
coming Dane

Died English. Every man about his king
Fought like a king ; the king like his own
man,

No better ; one for all, and all for one,
One soul ! and therefore have we shatter'd
back

The hugest wave from Norseland ever
yet

Surged on us, and our battle-axes broken
The Raven's wing, and dumb'd his carrion
croak

From the gray sea for ever. Many are
gone—

Drink to the dead who died for us, the
living

Who fought and would have died, but
happier lived,

If happier be to live ; they both have life
In the large mouth of England, till *her*
voice

Die with the world. Hail—hail !

Morcar. May all invaders perish like
Hardrada !

All traitors fail like Tostig !

[*All drink but Harold.*

Aldwyth. Thy cup's full !

Harold. I saw the hand of Tostig
cover it.

Our dear, dead, traitor-brother, Tostig,
him

Reverently we buried. Friends, had I
been here,

Without too large self-lauding I must hold
The sequel had been other than his league
With Norway, and this battle. Peace
be with him !

He was not of the worst. If there be
those

At banquet in this hall, and hearing me—
For there be those I fear who prick'd the
lion

To make him spring, that sight of Danish
blood

Might serve an end not English—peace
with them

Likewise, if *they* can be at peace with what
God gave us to divide us from the wolf !

Aldwyth (aside to Harold). Make not our Morcar sullen: it is not wise.

Harold. Hail to the living who fought, the dead who fell!

Voices. Hail, hail!

First Thane. How ran that answer which King Harold gave

To his dead namesake, when he ask'd for England?

Leofwin. 'Seven feet of English earth, or something more,

Seeing he is a giant!'

First Thane. Then for the bastard Six feet and nothing more!

Leofwin. Ay, but belike Thou hast not learnt his measure.

First Thane. By St. Edmund I over-measure him. Sound sleep to the man

Here by dead Norway without dream or dawn!

Second Thane. What is he bragging still that he will come

To thrust our Harold's throne from under him?

My nurse would tell me of a molehill crying

To a mountain 'Stand aside and room for me!'

First Thane. Let him come! let him come. Here's to him, sink or swim! [*Drinks.*]

Second Thane. God sink him!

First Thane. Cannot hands which had the strength

To shove that stranded iceberg off our shores,

And send the shatter'd North again to sea,

Scuttle his cockle-shell? What's Brunanburg

To Stamford-bridge? a war-crash, and so hard,

So loud, that, by St. Dunstan, old St. Thor—

By God, we thought him dead—but our old Thor

Heard his own thunder again, and woke and came

Among us again, and mark'd the sons of those

Who made this Britain England, break the North:

Mark'd how the war-axe swang,
Heard how the war-horn sang,
Mark'd how the spear-head sprang,
Heard how the shield-wall rang,
Iron on iron clang,
Anvil on hammer bang—

Second Thane. Hammer on anvil, hammer on anvil. Old dog, Thou art drunk, old dog!

First Thane. Too drunk to fight with thee!

Second Thane. Fight thou with thine own double, not with me, Keep that for Norman William!

First Thane. Down with William!

Third Thane. The washerwoman's brat!

Fourth Thane. The tanner's bastard!

Fifth Thane. The Falaise byblow!

Enter a Thane, from Pevensey, spatter'd with mud

Harold. Ay, but what late guest, As haggard as a fast of forty days, And caked and plaster'd with a hundred mires,

Hath stumbled on our cups?

Thane from Pevensey. My lord the King! William the Norman, for the wind had changed—

Harold. I felt it in the middle of that fierce fight

At Stamford-bridge. William hath landed, ha?

Thane from Pevensey. Landed at Pevensey—I am from Pevensey—Hath wasted all the land at Pevensey—Hath harried mine own cattle—God confound him!

I have ridden night and day from Pevensey—

A thousand ships—a hundred thousand men—

Thousands of horses, like as many lions

Neighing and roaring as they leapt to land—

Harold. How oft in coming hast thou broken bread?

Thane from Pevensey. Some thrice, or so.

Harold. Bring not thy hollowness On our full feast. Famine is fear, were it but

Of being starved. Sit down, sit down, and eat,

And, when again red-blooded, speak again; (*Aside.*) The men that guarded England to the South

Were scatter'd to the harvest. . . . No power mine

To hold their force together. . . . Many are fallen

At Stamford-bridge . . . the people stupid-sure

Sleep like their swine . . . in South and North at once

I could not be.

(*Aloud.*) Gurth, Leofwin, Morcar, Edwin!

(*Pointing to the revellers.*) The curse of England! these are drown'd in wassail,

And cannot see the world but thro' their wines!

Leave them! and thee too, Aldwyth, must I leave—

Harsh is the news! hard is our honeymoon! Thy pardon. (*Turning round to his attendants.*) Break the banquet

up . . . Ye four!

And thou, my carrier-pigeon of black news, Cram thy crop full, but come when thou art call'd. [*Exit Harold.*]

ACT V

SCENE I.—A TENT ON A MOUND, FROM WHICH CAN BE SEEN THE FIELD OF SENLAC.

HAROLD, *sitting*; by him standing HUGH MARGOT the Monk, GURTH, LEOFWIN

Harold. Refer my cause, my crown to Rome! . . . The wolf

Mudded the brook and predetermined all. Monk,

Thou hast said thy say, and had my constant 'No'

For all but instant battle. I hear no more.

Margot. Hear me again—for the last time. Arise,

Scatter thy people home, descend the hill, Lay hands of full allegiance in thy Lord's And crave his mercy, for the Holy Father Hath given this realm of England to the Norman.

Harold. Then for the last time, monk, I ask again

When had the Lateran and the Holy Father

To do with England's choice of her own king?

Margot. Earl, the first Christian Caesar drew to the East

To leave the Pope dominion in the West. He gave him all the kingdoms of the West.

Harold. So!—did he?—Earl—I have a mind to play

The William with thine eyesight and thy tongue.

Earl—ay—thou art but a messenger of William.

I am weary—go: make me not wroth with thee!

Margot. Mock-king, I am the messenger of God,

His Norman Daniel! Mene, Mene, Tekel!

Is thy wrath Hell, that I should spare to cry,

Yon heaven is wroth with *thee*? Hear me again!

Our Saints have moved the Church that moves the world,

And all the Heavens and very God: they heard—

They know King Edward's promise and thine—thine.

Harold. Should they not know free England crowns herself?

Not know that he nor I had power to promise?

Not know that Edward cancell'd his own promise?

And for *my* part therein—Back to that juggler,
[*Rising.*]

Tell him the Saints are nobler than he dreams,

Tell him that God is nobler than the Saints,

And tell him we stand arm'd on Senlac Hill,

And bide the doom of God.

Margot. Hear it thro' me.
The realm for which thou art forsworn is cursed,

The babe enwomb'd and at the breast is cursed,

The corpse thou whelme'st with thine earth is cursed,

The soul who fighteth on thyside is cursed,

The seed thou sowest in thy field is cursed,

The steer wherewith thou plowest thy field is cursed,

The fowl that fleeth o'er thy field is cursed,

And thou, usurper, liar—

Harold. Out, beast monk !

[*Lifting his hand to strike him.*]

Gurth stops the blow.

I ever hated monks.

Margot. I am but a voice
Among you : murder, martyr me if ye will—

Harold. Thanks, Gurth ! The simple, silent, selfless man

Is worth a world of tonguesters. (*To Margot.*) Get thee gone !

He means the thing he says. See him out safe !

Leofwin. He hath blown himself as red as fire with curses.

An honest fool ! Follow me, honest fool,
But if thou blurt thy curse among our folk,
I know not—I may give that egg-bald head

The tap that silences.

Harold. See him out safe.
[*Exeunt Leofwin and Margot.*]

Gurth. Thou hast lost thine even temper, brother Harold !

Harold. Gurth, when I past by Waltham, my foundation
For men who serve the neighbour, not themselves,

I cast me down prone, praying ; and,
when I rose,

They told me that the Holy Rood had lean'd

And bow'd above me ; whether that which held it

Had weaken'd, and the Rood itself were bound

To that necessity which binds us down ;
Whether it bow'd at all but in their fancy ;
Or if it bow'd, whether it symbol'd ruin
Or glory, who shall tell ? but they were sad,

And somewhat sadden'd me.

Gurth. Yet if a fear,
Or shadow of a fear, lest the strange Saints

By whom thou sware'st, should have power to balk

Thy puissance in this fight with him, who made

And heard thee swear—brother—I have not sworn—

If the king fall, may not the kingdom fall ?

But if I fall, I fall, and thou art king ;

And, if I win, I win, and thou art king ;

Draw thou to London, there make strength to breast

Whatever chance, but leave this day to me.

Leofwin (entering). And waste the land about thee as thou goest,
And be thy hand as winter on the field,
To leave the foe no forage.

Harold. Noble Gurth !
Best son of Godwin ! If I fall, I fall—
The doom of God ! How should the people fight

When the king flies ? And, Leofwin, art thou mad ?

How should the King of England waste the fields

Of England, his own people ?—No glance yet

Of the Northumbrian helmet on the heath ?

Leofwin. No, but a shoal of wives upon the heath,
And someone saw thy willy-nilly nun
Vying a tress against our golden fern.

Harold. Vying a tear with our cold
dews, a sigh
With these low-moaning heavens. Let
her be fetch'd.
We have parted from our wife without
reproach,
Tho' we have pierced thro' all her practices;
And that is well.

Leofwin. I saw her even now :
She hath not left us.

Harold. Nought of Morcar then ?

Gurth. Nor seen, nor heard ; thine,
William's or his own
As wind blows, or tide flows : belike he
watches,
If this war-storm in one of its rough
rolls

Wash up that old crown of Northumber-
land.

Harold. I married her for Morcar—a
sin against
The truth of love. Evil for good, it seems,
Is oft as childless of the good as evil
For evil.

Leofwin. Good for good hath borne
at times
A bastard false as William.

Harold. Ay, if Wisdom
Pair'd not with Good. But I am some-
what worn,
A snatch of sleep were like the peace of
God.

Gurth, Leofwin, go once more about the
hill—

What did the dead man call it—Sanguelac,
The lake of blood ?

Leofwin. A lake that dips in William
As well as Harold.

Harold. Like enough. I have seen
The trenches dug, the palisades uprear'd
And wattled thick with ash and willow-
wands ;

Yea, wrought at them myself. Go round
once more ;

See all be sound and whole. No Norman
horse

Can shatter England, standing shield by
shield ;

Tell that again to all.

Gurth. I will, good brother.

Harold. Our guardsman hath but
toil'd his hand and foot,
I hand, foot, heart and head. Some
wine ! (*One pours wine into a
goblet which he hands to Harold.*)

Too much !

What ? we must use our battle-axe to-
day.

Our guardsmen have slept well, since we
came in ?

Leofwin. Ay, slept and snored. Your
second-sighted man
That scared the dying conscience of the
king,

Misheard their snores for groans. They
are up again

And chanting that old song of Brunanburg
Where England conquer'd.

Harold. That is well. The Norman,
What is he doing ?

Leofwin. Praying for Normandy ;
Our scouts have heard the tinkle of their
bells.

Harold. And our old songs are prayers
for England too !

But by all Saints—

Leofwin. Barring the Norman !

Harold. Nay,
Were the great trumpet blowing dooms-
day dawn,

I needs must rest. Call when the
Norman moves—

[*Exeunt all, but Harold.*
No horse—thousands of horses—our
shield wall—

Wall—break it not—break not—break—
[*Sleeps.*

Vision of Edward. Son Harold, I thy
king, who came before

To tell thee thou shouldst win at Stam-
ford-bridge,

Come yet once more, from where I am at
peace,

Because I loved thee in my mortal day,
To tell thee thou shalt die on Senlac
hill—

Sanguelac !

Vision of Wulfnoth. O brother, from
my ghastly oubliette

I send my voice across the narrow seas—

No more, no more, dear brother, never—
more—

Sanguelac !

Vision of Tostig. O brother, most
unbrotherlike to me,

Thou gavest thy voice against me in my
life,

I give my voice against thee from the
grave—

Sanguelac !

Vision of Norman Saints. O hapless
Harold ! King but for an hour !

Thou swarest falsely by our blessed bones,
We give our voice against thee out of
heaven !

Sanguelac ! Sanguelac ! The arrow ! the
arrow !

*Harold (starting up, battle-axe in
hand).* Away !

My battle-axe against your voices. Peace !
The king's last word—'the arrow !' I
shall die—

I die for England then, who lived for
England—

What nobler ? men must die.

I cannot fall into a falser world—

I have done no man wrong. Tostig, poor
brother,

Art *thou* so anger'd ?

Fain had I kept thine earldom in thy
hands

Save for thy wild and violent will that
wrench'd

All hearts of freemen from thee. I could
do

No other than this way advise the king
Against the race of Godwin. Is it possible
That mortal men should bear their earthly
heats

Into yon bloodless world, and threaten us
thence

Unschool'd of Death ? Thus then thou
art revenged—

I left our England naked to the South
To meet thee in the North. The Norse-
man's raid

Hath helpt the Norman, and the race of
Godwin

Hath ruin'd Godwin. No—our waking
thoughts

Suffer a stormless shipwreck in the pools
Of sullen slumber, and arise again

Disjointed : only dreams—where mine
own self

Takes part against myself ! Why ? for a
spark

Of self-disdain born in me when I swear
Falsely to him, the falser Norman, over
His gilded ark of mummy-saints, by whom
I knew not that I swear,—not for my-
self—

For England—yet not wholly—

Enter EDITH

Edith, Edith,
Get thou into thy cloister as the king
Will'd it : be safe : the perjury-mongering
Count

Hath made too good an use of Holy
Church

To break her close ! There the great
God of truth

Fill all thine hours with peace !—A lying
devil

Hath haunted me—mine oath—my wife
—I fain

Had made my marriage not a lie ; I could
not :

Thou art my bride ! and thou in after years
Praying perchance for this poor soul of
mine

In cold, white cells beneath an icy moon—
This memory to thee !—and this to
England,

My legacy of war against the Pope
From child to child, from Pope to Pope,
from age to age,
Till the sea wash her level with her shores,
Or till the Pope be Christ's.

Enter ALDWYTH

Aldwyth (to Edith). Away from him !

Edith. I will . . . I have not spoken
to the king

One word ; and one I must. Farewell !

Harold. [Going.
Not yet.

Stay.

Edith. To what use ?

Harold. The king commands thee,
woman !

(*To Aldwyth*)

Have thy two brethren sent their forces in ?

Aldwyth. Nay, I fear not.

Harold. Then there's no force in thee !
Thou didst possess thyself of Edward's ear
To part me from the woman that I loved !
Thou didst arouse the fierce Northum-
brians !

Thou hast been false to England and to
me !—

As . . . in some sort . . . I have been
false to thee.

Leave me. No more—Pardon on both
sides—Go !

Aldwyth. Alas, my lord, I loved thee.

Harold (bitterly). With a love
Passing thy love for Griffyth ! wherefore
now

Obey my first and last commandment. Go !

Aldwyth. O Harold ! husband ! Shall
we meet again ?

Harold. After the battle—after the
battle. Go.

Aldwyth. I go. (*Aside.*) That I could
stab her standing there !

[*Exit Aldwyth.*]

Edith. Alas, my lord, she loved thee.

Harold. Never ! never !

Edith. I saw it in her eyes !

Harold. I see it in thine.

And not on thee—nor England—fall
God's doom !

Edith. On thee ? on me. And thou
art England ! Alfred

Was England. Ethelred was nothing.
England

Is but her king, and thou art Harold !

Harold. Edith,

The sign in heaven—the sudden blast at
sea—

My fatal oath—the dead Saints—the dark
dreams—

The Pope's Anathema—the Holy Rood
That bow'd to me at Waltham—Edith, if
I, the last English King of England—

Edith. No,

First of a line that coming from the people,
And chosen by the people—

Harold. And fighting for
And dying for the people—

Edith. Living ! living !

Harold. Yea so, good cheer ! thou
art Harold, I am Edith !

Look not thus wan !

Edith. What matters how I look ?
Have we not broken Wales and Norse-
land ? slain,

Whose life was all one battle, incarnate
war,

Their giant-king, a mightier man-in-arms
Than William.

Harold. Ay, my girl, no tricks in
him—

No bastard he ! when all was lost, he
yell'd,

And bit his shield, and dash'd it on the
ground,

And swaying his two-handed sword about
him,

Two deaths at every swing, ran in upon
us

And died so, and I loved him as I hate
This liar who made me liar. If Hate can
kill,

And Loathing wield a Saxon battle-axe—

Edith. Waste not thy might before
the battle !

Harold. No,

And thou must hence. Stigand will see
thee safe,

And so—Farewell.

[*He is going, but turns back.*]

The ring thou dardest not wear,
I have had it fashion'd, see, to meet my
hand.

[*Harold shows the ring which is on
his finger.*]

Farewell !

[*He is going, but turns back again.*]

I am dead as Death this day to ought of
earth's

Save William's death or mine.

Edith. Thy death !—to-day !
Is it not thy birthday ?

Harold. Ay, that happy day !
A birthday welcome ! happy days and
many !

One—this !

[*They embrace.*]

Look, I will bear thy blessing into the battle

And front the doom of God.

Norman cries (heard in the distance).

Ha Rou ! Ha Rou !

Enter GURTH

Garth. The Norman moves !

Harold. Harold and Holy Cross !

[*Exeunt Harold and Gurth.*]

Enter STIGAND

Stigand. Our Church in arms—the lamb the lion—not

Spear into pruning-hook—the counter way—

Cowl, helm ; and crozier, battle-axe. Abbot Alfwig,

Leofric, and all the monks of Peterboro' Strike for the king ; but I, old wretch, old Stigand,

With hands too limp to brandish iron—and yet

I have a power—would Harold ask me for it—

I have a power.

Edith. What power, holy father ?

Stigand. 'Power now from Harold to command thee hence

And see thee safe from Senlac.

Edith. I remain !

Stigand. Yea, so will I, daughter, until I find

Which way the battle balance. I can see it

From where we stand : and, live or die, I would

I were among them !

Canons from Waltham (singing without)

Salva patriam

Sancte Pater,

Salva Fili,

Salva Spiritus,

Salva patriam,

Sancta Mater.¹

Edith. Are those the blessed angels quiring, father ?

Stigand. No, daughter, but the canons out of Waltham,

The king's foundation, that have follow'd him.

Edith. O God of battles, make their wall of shields

Firm as thy cliffs, strengthen their palisades !

What is that whirring sound ?

Stigand. The Norman arrow !

Edith. Look out upon the battle—is he safe ?

Stigand. The king of England stands between his banners.

He glitters on the crowning of the hill.

God save King Harold !

Edith. —chosen by his people And fighting for his people !

Stigand. There is one Come as Goliath came of yore—he flings

His brand in air and catches it again,

He is chanting some old warsong.

Edith. And no David To meet him ?

Stigand. Ay, there springs a Saxon on him,

Falls—and another falls.

Edith. Have mercy on us !

Stigand. Lo ! our good Gurth hath smitten him to the death.

Edith. So perish all the enemies of Harold !

Canons (singing).

Hostis in Angliam

Ruit prædator,

Illorum, Domine,

Scutum scindatur !

Hostis per Angliæ

Plagas bacchatur ;

Casa crematur,

Pastor fugatur

Grege trucidatur—

Stigand. Illos trucidat, Domine.

Edith. Ay, good father.

Canons (singing).

Illorum scelera

Pœna sequatur !

¹ The *a* throughout these Latin hymns should be sounded broad, as in 'father.'

English cries. Harold and Holy
Cross! Out! out!

Stigand. Our javelins
Answer their arrows. All the Norman foot
Are storming up the hill. The range of
knights

Sit, each a statue on his horse, and wait.

English cries. Harold and God Al-
mighty!

Norman cries. Ha Rou! Ha Rou!

Canons (singing).

Eques cum pedite
Præpediatur!
Illorum in lacrymas
Cruor fundatur!
Pereant, pereant,
Anglia precatur.

Stigand. Look, daughter, look.

Edith. Nay, father, look for me!

Stigand. Our axes lighten with a
single flash

About the summit of the hill, and heads
And arms are sliver'd off and splinter'd by
Their lightning—and they fly—the Nor-
man flies.

Edith. Stigand, O father, have we
won the day?

Stigand. No, daughter, no—they fall
behind the horse—

Their horse are thronging to the bar-
ricades;

I see the gonfanon of Holy Peter
Floating above their helmets—ha! he is
down!

Edith. He down! Who down?

Stigand. The Norman Count is down.

Edith. So perish all the enemies of
England!

Stigand. No, no, he hath risen again
—he bares his face—

Shouts something—he points onward—
all their horse

Swallow the hill locust-like, swarming
up.

Edith. O God of battles, make his
battle-axe keen

As thine own sharp-dividing justice, heavy
As thine own bolts that fall on crimeful
heads

Charged with the weight of heaven where-
from they fall!

Canons (singing).

Jacta tonitrua
Deus bellator!
Surgas e tenebris,
Sis vindicator!
Fulmina, fulmina
Deus vastator!

Edith. O God of battles, they are
three to one,
Make thou one man as three to roll them
down!

Canons (singing).

Equus cum equite
Dejiciatur!
Acies, Acies
Prona sternatur!
Illorum lanceas
Frange Creator!

Stigand. Yea, yea, for how their lances
snap and shiver
Against the shifting blaze of Harold's axe!
War-woodman of old Woden, how he fells
The mortal copse of faces! There! And
there!

The horse and horseman cannot meet the
shield,

The blow that brains the horseman cleaves
the horse,

The horse and horseman roll along the hill,
They fly once more, they fly, the Norman
flies!

Equus cum equite
Præcipitatur.

Edith. O God, the God of truth hath
heard my cry.

Follow them, follow them, drive them to
the sea!

Illorum scelera
Pœna sequatur!

Stigand. Truth! no; a lie; a trick,
a Norman trick!

They turn on the pursuer, horse against
foot,

They murder all that follow.

Edith. Have mercy on us!

Stigand. Hot-headed fools—to burst
the wall of shields !

They have broken the commandment of
the king !

Edith. His oath was broken—O holy
Norman Saints,

Ye that are now of heaven, and see
beyond

Your Norman shrines, pardon it, pardon
it,

That he forswore himself for all he loved,
Me, me and all ! Look out upon the
battle !

Stigand. They thunder again upon the
barricades.

My sight is eagle, but the strife so thick—
This is the hottest of it : hold, ash ! hold,
willow !

English cries. Out, out !

Norman cries. Ha Rou !

Stigand. Ha ! Gurth hath leapt upon
him

And slain him : he hath fallen.

Edith. And I am heard.
Glory to God in the Highest ! fallen,
fallen !

Stigand. No, no, his horse—he
mounts another—wields
His war-club, dashes it on Gurth, and
Gurth,

Our noble Gurth, is down !

Edith. Have mercy on us !

Stigand. And Leofwin is down !

Edith. Have mercy on us !

O Thou that knowest, let not my strong
prayer

Be weaken'd in thy sight, because I love
The husband of another !

Norman cries. Ha Rou ! Ha Rou !

Edith. I do not hear our English
war-cry.

Stigand. No.

Edith. Look out upon the battle—is
he safe ?

Stigand. He stands between the ban-
ners with the dead
So piled about him he can hardly move.

Edith (takes up the war-cry). Out !
out !

Norman cries. Ha Rou !

Edith (cries out). Harold and Holy
Cross !

Norman cries. Ha Rou ! Ha Rou !

Edith. What is that whirring sound ?

Stigand. The Norman sends his arrows
up to Heaven,

They fall on those within the palisade !

Edith. Look out upon the hill—is
Harold there ?

Stigand. Sanguelac—Sanguelac—the
arrow—the arrow !—away !

SCENE II.—FIELD OF THE DEAD. NIGHT

ALDWYTH and EDITH

Aldwyth. O Edith, art thou here ?
O Harold, Harold—

Our Harold—we shall never see him
more.

Edith. For there was more than sister
in my kiss,

And so the saints were wroth. I cannot
love them,

For they are Norman saints—and yet I
should—

They are so much holier than their harlot's
son

With whom they play'd their game against
the king !

Aldwyth. The king is slain, the
kingdom overthrown !

Edith. No matter !

Aldwyth. How no matter, Harold
slain ?—

I cannot find his body. O help me thou !
O Edith, if I ever wrought against thee,
Forgive me thou, and help me here !

Edith. No matter !

Aldwyth. Not help me, nor forgive
me ?

Edith. So thou saidest.

Aldwyth. I say it now, forgive me !

Edith. Cross me not !

I am seeking one who wedded me in
secret.

Whisper ! God's angels only know it. Ha !
What art thou doing here among the
dead ?

They are stripping the dead bodies naked
yonder,
And thou art come to rob them of their
rings!

Aldwyth. O Edith, Edith, I have lost
both crown

And husband.

Edith. So have I.

Aldwyth. I tell thee, girl,
I am seeking my dead Harold.

Edith. And I mine !
The Holy Father strangled him with a
hair

Of Peter, and his brother Tostig helpt ;
The wicked sister clapt her hands and
laugh'd ;

Then all the dead fell on him.

Aldwyth. Edith, Edith—

Edith. What was he like, this hus-
band? like to thee?

Call not for help from me. I knew him
not.

He lies not here : not close beside the
standard.

Here fell the truest, manliest hearts of
England.

Go further hence and find him.

Aldwyth. She is crazed !

Edith. That doth not matter either.

Lower the light.

He must be here.

*Enter two Canons, OSGOD and ATHELRIC,
with torches. They turn over the
dead bodies and examine them as they
pass.*

Osgod. I think that this is Thurkill.

Athelric. More likely Godric.

Osgod. I am sure this body

Is Alfwig, the king's uncle.

Athelric. So it is !

No, no—brave Gurth, one gash from
brow to knee !

Osgod. And here is Leofwin.

Edith. And here is *He* !

Aldwyth. Harold? Oh no—nay, if
it were—my God,

They have so maim'd and murder'd all
his face

There is no man can swear to him.

Edith. But one woman !

Look you, we never mean to part again.

I have found him, I am happy.

Was there not someone ask'd me for
forgiveness?

I yield it freely, being the true wife
Of this dead King, who never bore revenge.

*Enter COUNT WILLIAM and WILLIAM
MALET*

William. Who be these women?

And what body is this?

Edith. Harold, thy better !

William. Ay, and what art thou?

Edith. His wife !

Malet. Not true, my girl, here is the

Queen ! [*Pointing out Aldwyth.*

William (to Aldwyth). Wast thou his
Queen?

Aldwyth. I was the Queen of Wales.

William. Why then of England.

Madam, fear us not.

(*To Malet.*) Knowest thou this other?

Malet. When I visited England,
Some held she was his wife in secret—
some—

Well—some believed she was his para-
mour.

Edith. Norman, thou liest ! liars all
of you,

Your Saints and all ! *I* am his wife !
and she—

For look, our marriage ring !

[*She draws it off the finger of Harold.*

I lost it somehow—

I lost it, playing with it when I was wild.

That bred the doubt ! but I am wiser
now . . .

I am too wise . . . Will none among
you all

Bear me true witness—only for this once—
That I have found it here again?

[*She puts it on.*

And thou,

Thy wife am I for ever and evermore.

[*Falls on the body and dies.*

William. Death !—and enough of
death for this one day,

The day of St. Calixtus, and the day,

My day when I was born.

Malet. And this dead king's
Who, king or not, hath kinglike fought
and fallen,
His birthday, too. It seems but yester-
even

I held it with him in his English halls,
His day, with all his roof-tree ringing
'Harold,'

Before he fell into the snare of Guy ;
When all men counted Harold would be
king,

And Harold was most happy.

William. Thou art half English.
Take them away !

Malet, I vow to build a church to God
Here on the hill of battle ; let our high
altar

Stand where their standard fell . . . where
these two lie.

Take them away, I do not love to see
them.

Pluck the dead woman off the dead man,
Malet !

Malet. Faster than ivy. Must I hack
her arms off ?

How shall I part them ?

William. Leave them. Let them be !
Bury him and his paramour together.

He that was false in oath to me, it seems
Was false to his own wife. We will not
give him

A Christian burial : yet he was a warrior,
And wise, yea truthful, till that blighted
vow

Which God avenged to-day.

Wrap them together in a purple cloak

And lay them both upon the waste sea-
shore

At Hastings, there to guard the land for
which

He did forswear himself—a warrior—ay,
And but that Holy Peter fought for us,
And that the false Northumbrian held
aloof,

And save for that chance arrow which the
Saints

Sharpen'd and sent against him—who
can tell ?—

Three horses had I slain beneath me :
twice

I thought that all was lost. Since I
knew battle,

And that was from my boyhood, never
yet—

No, by the splendour of God—have I
fought men

Like Harold and his brethren, and his
guard

Of English. Every man about his king
Fell where he stood. They loved him :

and, pray God

My Normans may but move as true with
me

To the door of death. Of one self-stock
at first,

Make them again one people—Norman,
English ;

And English, Norman ; we should have
a hand

To grasp the world with, and a foot to
stamp it . . .

Flat. Praise the Saints. It is over.
No more blood !

I am king of England, so they thwart me
not,

And I will rule according to their laws.

(*To Aldwyth.*) Madam, we will entreat
thee with all honour.

Aldwyth. My punishment is more
than I can bear.

BECKET

TO THE LORD CHANCELLOR

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE EARL OF SELBORNE

MY DEAR SELBORNE—To you, the honoured Chancellor of our own day, I dedicate this dramatic memorial of your great predecessor;—which, altho' not intended in its present form to meet the exigencies of our modern theatre, has nevertheless—for so you have assured me—won your approbation.—Ever yours,

TENNYSON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

HENRY II. (*son of the Earl of Anjou*).
 THOMAS BECKET, *Chancellor of England, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury*.
 GILBERT FOLIOT, *Bishop of London*.
 ROGER, *Archbishop of York*.
 Bishop of Hereford.
 HILARY, *Bishop of Chichester*.
 JOCELYN, *Bishop of Salisbury*.
 JOHN OF SALISBURY } *friends of Becket*.
 HERBERT OF BOSHAM }
 WALTER MAP, *reputed author of 'Goliath,' Latin poems against the priesthood*.
 KING LOUIS OF FRANCE.
 GEOFFREY, *son of Rosamund and Henry*.
 GRIM, *a monk of Cambridge*.
 SIR REGINALD FITZURSE }
 SIR RICHARD DE BRITO } *the four knights of the King's household, enemies of Becket*.
 SIR WILLIAM DE TRACY }
 SIR HUGH DE MORVILLE }
 DE BROC OF SALTWOOD CASTLE.
 LORD LEICESTER.
 PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA.
 TWO KNIGHT TEMPLARS.
 JOHN OF OXFORD (*called the Swearer*).
 ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE, *Queen of England (divorced from Louis of France)*.
 ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD.
 MARGERV.

Knights, Monks, Beggars, etc.

PROLOGUE

A Castle in Normandy. Interior of the Hall. Roofs of a City seen thro' Windows.

HENRY and BECKET at chess

Henry. So then our good Archbishop
 Theobald

Lies dying.

Becket. I am grieved to know as
 much.

Henry. But we must have a mightier
 man than he

For his successor.

Becket. Have you thought of one?

Henry. A cleric lately poison'd his
 own mother,

And being brought before the courts of
 the Church,

They but degraded him. I hope they
 whipt him.

I would have hang'd him.

Becket.

It is your move.

Henry. Well—there. [*Moves.*
The Church in the pell-mell of Stephen's
time

Hath climb'd the throne and almost
clutch'd the crown ;

But by the royal customs of our realm
The Church should hold her baronies of me,
Like other lords amenable to law.

I'll have them written down and made
the law.

Becket. My liege, I move my bishop.

Henry. And if I live,
No man without my leave shall excom-
municate

My tenants or my household.

Becket. Look to your king.

Henry. No man without my leave
shall cross the seas

To set the Pope against me—I pray your
pardon.

Becket. Well—will you move ?

Henry. There. [*Moves.*

Becket. Check—you move so wildly.

Henry. There then ! [*Moves.*

Becket. Why—there then, for you see
my bishop

Hath brought your king to a standstill.
You are beaten.

Henry (*kicks over the board*). Why,
there then—down go bishop and
king together.

I loathe being beaten ; had I fixt my
fancy

Upon the game I should have beaten
thee,

But that was vagabond.

Becket. Where, my liege ? With
Phryne,

Or Lais, or thy Rosamund, or another ?

Henry. My Rosamund is no Lais,
Thomas Becket ;

And yet she plagues me too—no fault in
her—

But that I fear the Queen would have
her life.

Becket. Put her away, put her away,
my liege !

Put her away into a nunnery !

Safe enough there from her to whom thou
art bound

By Holy Church. And wherefore should
she seek

The life of Rosamund de Clifford more
Than that of other paramours of thine ?

Henry. How dost thou know I am
not wedded to her ?

Becket. How should I know ?

Henry. That is my secret, Thomas.

Becket. State secrets should be patent
to the statesman

Who serves and loves his king, and whom
the king

Loves not as statesman, but true lover
and friend.

Henry. Come, come, thou art but
deacon, not yet bishop,

No, nor archbishop, nor my confessor
yet.

I would to God thou wert, for I should
find

An easy father confessor in thee.

Becket. St. Denis, that thou shouldst
not. I should beat

Thy kingship as my bishop hath beaten
it.

Henry. Hell take thy bishop then,
and my kingship too !

Come, come, I love thee and I know
thee, I know thee,

A doter on white pheasant-flesh at feasts,
A sauce-deviser for thy days of fish,
A dish-designer, and most amorous
Of good old red sound liberal Gascon
wine :

Will not thy body rebel, man, if thou
flatter it ?

Becket. That palate is insane which
cannot tell

A good dish from a bad, new wine from
old.

Henry. Well, who loves wine loves
woman.

Becket. So I do.

Men are God's trees, and women are
God's flowers ;

And when the Gascon wine mounts to
my head,

The trees are all the statelier, and the
flowers

Are all the fairer.

Henry. And thy thoughts, thy fancies?

Becket. Good dogs, my liege, well
train'd, and easily call'd

Off from the game.

Henry. Save for some once or twice,
When they ran down the game and
worried it.

Becket. No, my liege, no!—not once
—in God's name, no!

Henry. Nay, then, I take thee at thy
word—believe thee

The veriest Galahad of old Arthur's hall.
And so this Rosamund, my true heart-
wife,

Not Eleanor—she whom I love indeed
As a woman should be loved—Why dost
thou smile

So dolorously?

Becket. My good liege, if a man
Wastes himself among women, how should
he love

A woman, as a woman should be loved?

Henry. How shouldst thou know
that never hast loved one?

Come, I would give her to thy care in
England

When I am out in Normandy or Anjou.

Becket. My lord, I am your subject,
not your—

Henry. Pander.

God's eyes! I know all that—not my
purveyor

Of pleasures, but to save a life—her life;
Ay, and the soul of Eleanor from hell-
fire.

I have built a secret bower in England,
Thomas,

A nest in a bush.

Becket. And where, my liege?

Henry (whispers). Thine ear.

Becket. That's lone enough.

Henry (laying paper on table). This
chart here mark'd 'Her Bower,'

Take, keep it, friend. See, first, a circ-
ling wood,

A hundred pathways running everyway,
And then a brook, a bridge; and after
that

This labyrinthine brickwork maze in
maze,

And then another wood, and in the midst
A garden and my Rosamund. Look,
this line—

The rest you see is colour'd green—but
this

Draws thro' the chart to her.

Becket. This blood-red line?

Henry. Ay! blood, perchance, except
thou see to her.

Becket. And where is she? There
in her English nest?

Henry. Would God she were—no,
here within the city.

We take her from her secret bower in
Anjou

And pass her to her secret bower in
England.

She is ignorant of all but that I love her.

Becket. My liege, I pray thee let me
hence: a widow

And orphan child, whom one of thy wild
barons—

Henry. Ay, ay, but swear to see to
her in England.

Becket. Well, well, I swear, but not
to please myself.

Henry. Whatever come between us?

Becket. What should come

Between us, Henry?

Henry. Nay—I know not, Thomas.

Becket. What need then? Well—
whatever come between us.

[*Going.*]

Henry. A moment! thou didst help
me to my throne

In Theobald's time, and after by thy
wisdom

Hast kept it firm from shaking; but
now I,

For my realm's sake, myself must be the
wizard

To raise that tempest which will set it
trembling

Only to base it deeper. I, true son
Of Holy Church—no croucher to the
Gregories

That tread the kings their children under-
heel—

Must curb her; and the Holy Father,
while

This Barbarossa butts him from his chair,
Will need my help—be facile to my
hands.

Now is my time. Yet—lest there should
be flashes

And fulminations from the side of Rome,
An interdict on England—I will have
My young son Henry crown'd the King
of England,

That so the Papal bolt may pass by
England,

As seeming his, not mine, and fall abroad.
I'll have it done—and now.

Becket. Surely too young
Even for this shadow of a crown; and
tho'

I love him heartily, I can spy already
A strain of hard and headstrong in him.

Say,
The Queen should play his kingship
against thine!

Henry. I will not think so, Thomas.
Who shall crown him?
Canterbury is dying.

Becket. The next Canterbury.

Henry. And who shall he be, my
friend Thomas? Who?

Becket. Name him; the Holy Father
will confirm him.

Henry (*lays his hand on Becket's
shoulder*). Here!

Becket. Mock me not. I am not
even a monk.

Thy jest—no more. Why—look—is
this a sleeve

For an archbishop?

Henry. But the arm within
Is Becket's, who hath beaten down my
foes.

Becket. A soldier's, not a spiritual
arm.

Henry. I lack a spiritual soldier,
Thomas—

A man of this world and the next to boot.

Becket. There's Gilbert Foliot.

Henry. He! too thin, too thin.
Thou art the man to fill out the Church
robe;

Your Foliot fasts and fawns too much
for me.

Becket. Roger of York.

Henry. Roger is Roger of York.
King, Church, and State to him but foils
wherein

To set that precious jewel, Roger of York.
No.

Becket. Henry of Winchester?

Henry. Him who crown'd Stephen—
King Stephen's brother! No; too royal
for me.

And I'll have no more Anselms.

Becket. Sire, the business
Of thy whole kingdom waits me: let
me go.

Henry. Answer me first.

Becket. Then for thy barren jest
Take thou mine answer in bare common-
place—

Nolo episcopari.

Henry. Ay, but *Nolo
Archiepiscopari*, my good friend,
Is quite another matter.

Becket. A more awful one.
Make me archbishop! Why, my liege,
I know

Some three or four poor priests a thou-
sand times

Fitter for this grand function. *Me arch-
bishop!*

God's favour and king's favour might so
clash

That thou and I—— That were a jest
indeed!

Henry. Thou angerest me, man: I
do not jest.

*Enter ELEANOR and SIR REGINALD
FITZURSE*

Eleanor (*singing*). Over! the sweet
summer closes,

The reign of the roses is done——

Henry (*to Becket, who is going*). Thou
shalt not go. I have not ended
with thee.

Eleanor (*seeing chart on table*). This
chart with the red line! her bower!
whose bower?

Henry. The chart is not mine, but
Becket's: take it, Thomas.

Eleanor. Becket! O—ay—and these

chessmen on the floor—the king's crown broken! Becket hath beaten thee again—and thou hast kicked down the board. I know thee of old.

Henry. True enough, my mind was set upon other matters.

Eleanor. What matters? State matters? love matters?

Henry. My love for thee, and thine for me.

Eleanor. Over! the sweet summer closes,

The reign of the roses is done;

Over and gone with the roses,

And over and gone with the sun.

Here; but our sun in Aquitaine lasts longer. I would I were in Aquitaine again—your north chills me.

Over! the sweet summer closes,

And never a flower at the close;

Over and gone with the roses,

And winter again and the snows.

That was not the way I ended it first—but unsymmetrically, preposterously, illogically, out of passion, without art—like a song of the people. Will you have it? The last Parthian shaft of a forlorn Cupid at the King's left breast, and all left-handedness and under-handedness.

And never a flower at the close,

Over and gone with the roses,

Not over and gone with the rose.

True, one rose will outblossom the rest, one rose in a bower. I speak after my fancies, for I am a Troubadour, you know, and won the violet at Toulouse; but my voice is harsh here, not in tune, a nightingale out of season; for marriage, rose or no rose, has killed the golden violet.

Becket. Madam, you do ill to scorn wedded love.

Eleanor. So I do. Louis of France loved me, and I dreamed that I loved Louis of France: and I loved Henry of England, and Henry of England dreamed that he loved me; but the marriage-garland withers even with the putting on, the bright link rusts with the breath of

the first after-marriage kiss, the harvest moon is the ripening of the harvest, and the honeymoon is the gall of love; he dies of his honeymoon. I could pity this poor myself that it is no better ordered.

Henry. Dead is he, my Queen? What, altogether? Let me swear nay to that by this cross on thy neck. God's eyes! what a lovely cross! what jewels!

Eleanor. Doth it please you? Take it and wear it on that hard heart of yours—there. [*Gives it to him.*]

Henry (*puts it on*). On this left breast before so hard a heart, To hide the scar left by thy Parthian dart.

Eleanor. Has my simple song set you jingling? Nay, if I took and translated that hard heart into our Provençal facilities, I could so play about it with the rhyme—

Henry. That the heart were lost in the rhyme and the matter in the metre. May we not pray you, Madam, to spare us the hardness of your facility?

Eleanor. The wells of Castaly are not wasted upon the desert. We did but jest.

Henry. There's no jest on the brows of Herbert there. What is it, Herbert?

Enter HERBERT OF BOSHAM

Herbert. My liege, the good Archbishop is no more.

Henry. Peace to his soul!

Herbert. I left him with peace on his face—that sweet other-world smile, which will be reflected in the spiritual body among the angels. But he longed much to see your Grace and the Chancellor ere he past, and his last words were a commendation of Thomas Becket to your Grace as his successor in the archbishoprick.

Henry. Ha, Becket! thou rememberest our talk!

Becket. My heart is full of tears—I have no answer.

Henry. Well, well, old men must die, or the world would grow mouldy,

would only breed the past again. Come to me to-morrow. Thou hast but to hold out thy hand. Meanwhile the revenues are mine. A-hawking, a-hawking! If I sit, I grow fat.

[Leaps over the table, and exit.]

Becket. He did prefer me to the chancellorship,

Believing I should ever aid the Church—
But have I done it? He commends me now

From out his grave to this archbishoprick.

Herbert. A dead man's dying wish should be of weight.

Becket. *His* should. Come with me.
Let me learn at full

The manner of his death, and all he said.

[Exeunt Herbert and Becket.]

Eleanor. Fitzurse, that chart with the red line—thou sawest it—her bower.

Fitzurse. Rosamund's?

Eleanor. Ay—there lies the secret of her whereabouts, and the King gave it to his Chancellor.

Fitzurse. To this son of a London merchant—how your Grace must hate him.

Eleanor. Hate him? as brave a soldier as Henry and a goodlier man: but thou—dost thou love this Chancellor, that thou hast sworn a voluntary allegiance to him?

Fitzurse. Not for my love toward him, but because he had the love of the King. How should a baron love a beggar on horseback, with the retinue of three kings behind him, outroyalling royalty? Besides, he help the King to break down our castles, for the which I hate him.

Eleanor. For the which I honour him. Statesman not Churchman he. A great and sound policy that: I could embrace him for it: you could not see the King for the kinglings.

Fitzurse. Ay, but he speaks to a noble as tho' he were a churl, and to a churl as if he were a noble.

Eleanor. Pride of the plebeian!

Fitzurse. And this plebeian like to be Archbishop!

Eleanor. True, and I have an inherited loathing of these black sheep of the Papacy. Archbishop? I can see further into a man than our hot-headed Henry, and if there ever come feud between Church and Crown, and I do not then charm this secret out of our loyal Thomas, I am not Eleanor.

Fitzurse. Last night I followed a woman in the city here. Her face was veiled, but the back methought was Rosamund—his paramour, thy rival. I can feel for thee.

Eleanor. Thou feel for me!—paramour—rival! King Louis had no paramours, and I loved him none the more. Henry had many, and I loved him none the less—now neither more nor less—not at all; the cup's empty. I would she were but his paramour, for men tire of their fancies; but I fear this one fancy hath taken root, and borne blossom too, and she, whom the King loves indeed, is a power in the State. Rival!—ay, and when the King passes, there may come a crash and embroilment as in Stephen's time; and her children—canst thou not—that secret matter which would heat the King against thee (*whispers him and he starts*). Nay, that is safe with me as with thyself: but canst thou not—thou art drowned in debt—thou shalt have our love, our silence, and our gold—canst thou not—if thou light upon her—free me from her?

Fitzurse. Well, Madam, I have loved her in my time.

Eleanor. No, my bear, thou hast not. My Courts of Love would have held thee guiltless of love—the fine attractions and repulses, the delicacies, the subtleties.

Fitzurse. Madam, I loved according to the main purpose and intent of nature.

Eleanor. I warrant thee! thou wouldst hug thy Cupid till his ribs cracked—enough of this. Follow me this Rosamund day and night, whithersoever she goes; track her, if thou canst,

even into the King's lodging, that I may (*clenches her fist*)—may at least have my cry against him and her,—and thou in thy way shouldst be jealous of the King, for thou in thy way didst once, what shall I call it, affect her thine own self.

Fitzurse. Ay, but the young colt winced and whinnied and flung up her heels; and then the King came honeying about her, and this Becket, her father's friend, like enough staved us from her.

Eleanor. Us!

Fitzurse. Yea, by the Blessed Virgin! There were more than I buzzing round the blossom—De Tracy—even that flint De Brito.

Eleanor. Carry her off among you; run in upon her and devour her, one and all of you; make her as hateful to herself and to the King, as she is to me.

Fitzurse. I and all would be glad to wreak our spite on the rosfaced minion of the King, and bring her to the level of the dust, so that the King—

Eleanor. Let her eat it like the serpent, and be driven out of her paradise.

ACT I

SCENE I.—BECKET'S HOUSE IN LONDON

Chamber barely furnished. BECKET *unrobing.* HERBERT OF BOSHAM and SERVANT.

Servant. Shall I not help your lordship to your rest?

Becket. Friend, am I so much better than thyself

That thou shouldst help me? Thou art wearied out

With this day's work, get thee to thine own bed.

Leave me with Herbert, friend.

[*Exit Servant.*]

Help me off, Herbert, with this—and this.

Herbert. Was not the people's blessing as we past

Heart-comfort and a balsam to thy blood?

Becket. The people know their Church a tower of strength,
A bulwark against Throne and Baronage.
Too heavy for me, this; off with it,
Herbert!

Herbert. Is it so much heavier than thy Chancellor's robe?

Becket. No; but the Chancellor's and the Archbishop's

Together more than mortal man can bear.

Herbert. Not heavier than thine armour at Thoulouse?

Becket. O Herbert, Herbert, in my chancellorship
I more than once have gone against the Church.

Herbert. To please the King?

Becket. Ay, and the King of kings,
Or justice; for it seem'd to me but just
The Church should pay her scutage like the lords.

But hast thou heard this cry of Gilbert Foliot

That I am not the man to be your Primate,

For Henry could not work a miracle—
Make an Archbishop of a soldier?

Herbert. Ay,

For Gilbert Foliot held himself the man.

Becket. Am I the man? My mother,
ere she bore me,
Dream'd that twelve stars fell glittering
out of heaven

Into her bosom.

Herbert. Ay, the fire, the light,
The spirit of the twelve Apostles enter'd
Into thy making.

Becket. And when I was a child,
The Virgin, in a vision of my sleep,
Gave me the golden keys of Paradise.

Dream,
Or prophecy, that?

Herbert. Well, dream and prophecy both.

Becket. And when I was of Theobald's household, once—
The good old man would sometimes have his jest—

He took his mitre off, and set it on me,

And said, 'My young Archbishop—thou
wouldst make
A stately Archbishop!' Jest or prophecy
there?

Herbert. Both, Thomas, both.

Becket. Am I the man? That rang
Within my head last night, and when I
slept

Methought I stood in Canterbury Minster,
And spake to the Lord God, and said,
'O Lord,

I have been a lover of wines, and delicate
meats,

And secular splendours, and a favourer
Of players, and a courtier, and a feeder
Of dogs and hawks, and apes, and lions,
and lynxes.

Am I the man?' And the Lord answer'd
me,

'Thou art the man, and all the more the
man.'

And then I asked again, 'O Lord my God,
Henry the King hath been my friend, my
brother,

And mine uplifter in this world, and
chosen me

For this thy great archbishoprick, be-
lieving

That I should go against the Church with
him,

And I shall go against him with the
Church,

And I have said no word of this to him :
Am I the man?' And the Lord answer'd

me,
'Thou art the man, and all the more the
man.'

And thereupon, methought, He drew to-
ward me,

And smote me down upon the Minster floor.
I fell.

Herbert. God make not thee, but thy
foes, fall.

Becket. I fell. Why fall? Why did
He smite me? What?

Shall I fall off—to please the King once
more?

Not fight—tho' somehow traitor to the
King—

My truest and mine utmost for the Church?

Herbert. Thou canst not fall that way.

Let traitor be ;

For how have fought thine utmost for the
Church,

Save from the throne of thine archbishop-
rick?

And how been made Archbishop hadst
thou told him,

'I mean to fight mine utmost for the
Church,

Against the King'?

Becket. But dost thou think the King
Forced mine election?

Herbert. I do think the King
Was potent in the election, and why not?
Why should not Heaven have so inspired
the King?

Be comforted. Thou art the man—be
thou

A mightier Anselm.

Becket. I do believe thee, then. I
am the man.

And yet I seem appall'd—on such a
sudden

At such an eagle-height I stand and see
The rift that runs between me and the
King.

I served our Theobald well when I was
with him ;

I served King Henry well as Chancellor ;
I am his no more, and I must serve the

Church.

This Canterbury is only less than Rome,
And all my doubts I fling from me like
dust,

Winnow and scatter all scruples to the
wind,

And all the puissance of the warrior,
And all the wisdom of the Chancellor,

And all the heap'd experiences of life,
I cast upon the side of Canterbury—

Our holy mother Canterbury, who sits
With tatter'd robes. Laics and barons,

thro'

The random gifts of careless kings, have
graspt

Her livings, her advowsons, granges,
farms,

And goodly acres—we will make her
whole ;

Not one rood lost. And for these Royal customs,
These ancient Royal customs—they are Royal,
Not of the Church—and let them be anathema,
And all that speak for them anathema.

Herbert. Thomas, thou art moved too much.

Becket. O Herbert, here

I gash myself asunder from the King,
Tho' leaving each, a wound; mine own, a grief

To show the scar for ever—his, a hate
Not ever to be heal'd.

Enter ROSAMUND DE CLIFFORD, flying from SIR REGINALD FITZURSE. Drops her veil.

Becket. Rosamund de Clifford!

Rosamund. Save me, father, hide me—they follow me—and I must not be known.

Becket. Pass in with Herbert there.

[Exeunt Rosamund and Herbert by side door.]

Enter FITZURSE

Fitzurse. The Archbishop!

Becket. Ay! what wouldst thou, Reginald?

Fitzurse. Why—why, my lord, I follow'd—follow'd one——

Becket. And then what follows? Let me follow thee.

Fitzurse. It much imports me I should know her name.

Becket. What her?

Fitzurse. The woman that I follow'd hither.

Becket. Perhaps it may import her all as much

Not to be known.

Fitzurse. And what care I for that? Come, come, my lord Archbishop; I saw that door

Close even now upon the woman.

Becket. Well?

Fitzurse (making for the door). Nay, let me pass, my lord, for I must know.

Becket. Back, man!

Fitzurse. Then tell me who and what she is.

Becket. Art thou so sure thou followedst anything?

Go home, and sleep thy wine off, for thine eyes

Glare stupid-wild with wine.

Fitzurse (making to the door). I must and will.

I care not for thy new archbishoprick.

Becket. Back, man, I tell thee! What!

Shall I forget my new archbishoprick
And smite thee with my crozier on the skull?

'Fore God, I am a mightier man than thou.

Fitzurse. It well befits thy new archbishoprick

To take the vagabond woman of the street

Into thine arms!

Becket. O drunken ribaldry!

Out, beast! out, bear!

Fitzurse. I shall remember this.

Becket. Do, and begone!

[Exit Fitzurse.]

[Going to the door, sees De Tracy.]

Tracy, what dost thou here?

De Tracy. My lord, I follow'd Reginald Fitzurse.

Becket. Follow him out!

De Tracy. I shall remember this Discourtesy. *[Exit.]*

Becket. Do. These be those baron-brutes

That havock'd all the land in Stephen's day.

Rosamund de Clifford.

Re-enter ROSAMUND and HERBERT

Rosamund. Here am I.

Becket. Why here?

We gave thee to the charge of John of Salisbury,

To pass thee to thy secret bower to-morrow.

Wast thou not told to keep thyself from sight?

Rosamund. Poor bird of passage ! so
 I was ; but, father,
 They say that you are wise in winged
 things,
 And know the ways of Nature. Bar the
 bird
 From following the fled summer—a chink
 —he's out,
 Gone ! And there stole into the city a
 breath
 Full of the meadows, and it minded me
 Of the sweet woods of Clifford, and the
 walks
 Where I could move at pleasure, and I
 thought
 Lo ! I must out or die.

Becket. Or out *and* die.
 And what hast thou to do with this
 Fitzurse ?

Rosamund. Nothing. He sued my
 hand. I shook at him.
 He found me once alone. Nay—nay—
 I cannot
 Tell you : my father drove him and his
 friends,

De Tracy and De Brito, from our castle.
 I was but fourteen and an April then.
 I heard him swear revenge.

Becket. Why will you court it
 By self-exposure ? flutter out at night ?
 Make it so hard to save a moth from the
 fire ?

Rosamund. I have saved many of
 'em. You catch 'em, so,
 Softly, and fling them out to the free
 air.

They burn themselves *within-door*.

Becket. Our good John
 Must speed you to your bower at once.
 The child
 Is there already.

Rosamund. Yes—the child—the
 child—

O rare, a whole long day of open field.

Becket. Ay, but you go disguised.

Rosamund. O rare again !
 We'll baffle them, I warrant. What
 shall it be ?

I'll go as a nun.

Becket. No.

Rosamund. What, not good enough
 Even to play at nun ?

Becket. Dan John with a nun,
 That Map, and these new railers at the
 Church

May plaster his clean name with
 scurrilous rhymes !

No !

Go like a monk, cowling and clouding up
 That fatal star, thy Beauty, from the squint
 Of lust and glare of malice. Good night !
 good night !

Rosamund. Father, I am so tender
 to all hardness !

Nay, father, first thy blessing.

Becket. Wedded ?

Rosamund. Father !

Becket. Well, well ! I ask no more.
 Heaven bless thee ! hence !

Rosamund. O, holy father, when
 thou seest him next,
 Commend me to thy friend.

Becket. What friend ?

Rosamund. The King.

Becket. Herbert, take out a score of
 armed men

To guard this bird of passage to her cage ;
 And watch Fitzurse, and if he follow
 thee,

Make him thy prisoner. I am Chancellor
 yet.

[*Exeunt Herbert and Rosamund.*

Poor soul ! poor soul !

My friend, the King ! . . . O thou
 Great Seal of England,

Given me by my dear friend the King of
 England—

We long have wrought together, thou
 and I—

Now must I send thee as a common
 friend

To tell the King, my friend, I am against
 him.

We are friends no more : he will say that,
 not I.

The worldly bond between us is dissolved,
 Not yet the love : can I be under him
 As Chancellor ? as Archbishop over him ?
 Go therefore like a friend slighted by one
 That hath climb'd up to nobler company.

Not slighted—all but moan'd for: thou
must go.

I have not dishonour'd thee—I trust I
have not;

Not mangled justice. May the hand
that next

Inherits thee be but as true to thee

As mine hath been! O, my dear friend,
the King!

O brother!—I may come to martyrdom.

I am martyr in myself already.—Herbert!

Herbert (re-entering). My lord, the
town is quiet, and the moon

Divides the whole long street with light
and shade.

No footfall—no Fitzurse. We have seen
her home.

Becket. The hog hath tumbled himself
into some corner,

Some ditch, to snore away his drunken-
ness

Into the sober headache,—Nature's moral
Against excess. Let the Great Seal be
sent

Back to the King to-morrow.

Herbert. Must that be?

The King may rend the bearer limb from
limb.

Think on it again.

Becket. Against the moral excess
No physical ache, but failure it may be
Of all we aim'd at. John of Salisbury
Hath often laid a cold hand on my heats,
And Herbert hath rebuked me even
now.

I will be wise and wary, not the soldier
As Foliot swears it.—John, and out of
breath!

Enter JOHN OF SALISBURY

John of Salisbury. Thomas, thou wast
not happy taking charge
Of this wild Rosamund to please the
King,

Nor am I happy having charge of her—
The included Danaë has escaped again
Her tower, and her Acrisius—where to
seek?

I have been about the city.

Becket. Thou wilt find her

Back in her lodging. Go with her—at
once—

To-night—my men will guard you to the
gates.

Be sweet to her, she has many enemies.
Send the Great Seal by daybreak. Both,
good night!

SCENE II.—STREET IN NORTHAMP-
TON LEADING TO THE CASTLE

ELEANOR'S RETAINERS and BECKET'S
RETAINERS fighting. *Enter ELEANOR
and BECKET from opposite streets.*

Eleanor. Peace, fools!

Becket. Peace, friends! what idle
brawl is this?

Retainer of Becket. They said—her
Grace's people—thou wast
found—

Liars! I shame to quote 'em—caught,
my lord,

With a wanton in thy lodging—Hell
requite 'em!

Retainer of Eleanor. My liege, the
Lord Fitzurse reported this

In passing to the Castle even now.

Retainer of Becket. And then they
mock'd us and we fell upon 'em,
For we would live and die for thee, my
lord,

However kings and queens may frown on
thee.

Becket to his Retainers. Go, go—no
more of this!

Eleanor to her Retainers. Away!—
(*Exeunt Retainers*) Fitzurse—

Becket. Nay, let him be.

Eleanor. No, no, my Lord
Archbishop,

'Tis known you are midwinter to all
women,

But often in your chancellorship you
served

The follies of the King.

Becket. No, not these follies!

Eleanor. My lord, Fitzurse beheld
her in your lodging.

Becket. Whom?

Eleanor. Well—you know—the minion, Rosamund.

Becket. He had good eyes!

Eleanor. Then hidden in the street
He watch'd her pass with John of Salisbury
And heard her cry 'Where is this bower
of mine?'

Becket. Good ears too!

Eleanor. You are going to the Castle,
Will you subscribe the customs?

Becket. I leave that,
Knowing how much you reverence Holy Church,
My liege, to your conjecture.

Eleanor. I and mine—
And many a baron holds along with me—

Are not so much at feud with Holy Church

But we might take your side against the customs—

So that you grant me one slight favour.

Becket. What?

Eleanor. A sight of that same chart
which Henry gave you
With the red line—'her bower.'

Becket. And to what end?

Eleanor. That Church must scorn
herself whose fearful Priest
Sits winking at the license of a king,
Altho' we grant when kings are dangerous
The Church must play into the hands of kings;

Look! I would move this wanton from his sight

And take the Church's danger on myself.

Becket. For which she should be duly grateful.

Eleanor. True!

Tho' she that binds the bond, herself
should see
That kings are faithful to their marriage vow.

Becket. Ay, Madam, and queens also.

Eleanor. And queens also!
What is your drift?

Becket. My drift is to the Castle,
Where I shall meet the Barons and my King.

[*Exit.*

DE BROC, DE TRACY, DE BRITO,
DE MORVILLE (*passing*)

Eleanor. To the Castle?

De Broc. Ay!

Eleanor. Stir up the King, the Lords!
Set all on fire against him!

De Brito. Ay, good Madam!
[*Exeunt.*

Eleanor. Fool! I will make thee
hateful to thy King.
Churl! I will have thee frightened into
France,
And I shall live to trample on thy grave.

SCENE III.—THE HALL IN NORTH-AMPTON CASTLE

On one side of the stage the doors of an inner Council-Chamber, half-open. At the bottom, the great doors of the Hall. ROGER ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, FOLIOT BISHOP OF LONDON, HILARY OF CHICHESTER, BISHOP OF HEREFORD, RICHARD DE HASTINGS (Grand Prior of Templars), PHILIP DE ELEEMOSYNA (the Pope's Almoner), and others. DE BROC, FITZURSE, DE BRITO, DE MORVILLE, DE TRACY, and other BARONS assembled—a table before them. JOHN OF OXFORD, President of the Council.

Enter BECKET and HERBERT OF BOSHAM

Becket. Where is the King?

Roger of York. Gone hawking on the Nene,

His heart so gall'd with thine ingratitude,
He will not see thy face till thou hast sign'd

These ancient laws and customs of the realm.

Thy sending back the Great Seal mad-den'd him,

He all but pluck'd the bearer's eyes away.

Take heed, lest he destroy thee utterly.

Becket. Then shalt thou step into my place and sign.

Roger of York. Didst thou not promise Henry to obey
These ancient laws and customs of the realm?

Becket. Saving the honour of my order—ay.
Customs, traditions,—clouds that come and go;
The customs of the Church are Peter's rock.

Roger of York. Saving thine order!
But King Henry sware
That, saving his King's kingship, he would grant thee
The crown itself. Saving thine order, Thomas,
Is black and white at once, and comes to nought.
O bolster'd up with stubbornness and pride,
Wilt thou destroy the Church in fighting for it,
And bring us all to shame?

Becket. Roger of York,
When I and thou were youths in Theobald's house,
Twice did thy malice and thy calumnies
Exile me from the face of Theobald.
Now I am Canterbury and thou art York.

Roger of York. And is not York the peer of Canterbury?
Did not Great Gregory bid St. Austin here
Found two archbishopricks, London and York?

Becket. What came of that? The first archbishop fled,
And York lay barren for a hundred years.
Why, by this rule, Foliot may claim the pall
For London too.

Foliot. And with good reason too,
For London had a temple and a priest
When Canterbury hardly bore a name.

Becket. The pagan temple of a pagan Rome!
The heathen priesthood of a heathen creed!
Thou goest beyond thyself in petulancy!

Who made thee London? Who, but Canterbury?

John of Oxford. Peace, peace, my lords! these customs are no longer
As Canterbury calls them, wandering clouds,
But by the King's command are written down,
And by the King's command I, John of Oxford,

The President of this Council, read them.
Becket. Read!

John of Oxford (reads). 'All causes of advowsons and presentations, whether between laymen or clerics, shall be tried in the King's court.'

Becket. But that I cannot sign: for that would drag
The cleric before the civil judgment-seat,
And on a matter wholly spiritual.

John of Oxford. 'If any cleric be accused of felony, the Church shall not protect him; but he shall answer to the summons of the King's court to be tried therein.'

Becket. And that I cannot sign.
Is not the Church the visible Lord on earth?

Shall hands that do create the Lord be bound
Behind the back like laymen-criminals?
The Lord be judged again by Pilate?
No!

John of Oxford. 'When a bishoprick falls vacant, the King, till another be appointed, shall receive the revenues thereof.'

Becket. And that I cannot sign. Is the King's treasury
A fit place for the monies of the Church,
That be the patrimony of the poor?

John of Oxford. 'And when the vacancy is to be filled up, the King shall summon the chapter of that church to court, and the election shall be made in the Chapel Royal, with the consent of our lord the King, and by the advice of his Government.'

Becket. And that I cannot sign: for that would make

Our island-Church a schism from Christ-
endom,
And weight down all free choice beneath
the throne.

Foliot. And was thine own election
so canonical,
Good father ?

Becket. If it were not, Gilbert Foliot,
I mean to cross the sea to France, and lay
My crozier in the Holy Father's hands,
And bid him re-create me, Gilbert Foliot.

Foliot. Nay ; by another of these
customs thou

Wilt not be suffer'd so to cross the seas
Without the license of our lord the King.

Becket. That, too, I cannot sign.

DE BROC, DE BRITO, DE TRACY,
FITZURSE, DE MORVILLE, *start up*
—a clash of swords.

Sign and obey !

Becket. My lords, is this a combat or
a council ?

Are ye my masters, or my lord the King ?
Ye make this clashing for no love o' the
customs

Or constitutions, or whate'er ye call them,
But that there be among you those that
hold

Lands reft from Canterbury.

De Broc. And mean to keep them,
In spite of thee !

Lords (shouting). Sign, and obey the
crown !

Becket. The crown ? Shall I do less
for Canterbury

Than Henry for the crown ? King
Stephen gave

Many of the crown lands to those that
helped him ;

Sodid Matilda, the King's mother. Mark,
When Henry came into his own again,
Then he took back not only Stephen's gifts,
But his own mother's, lest the crown
should be

Shorn of ancestral splendour. This did
Henry.

Shall I do less for mine own Canterbury ?
And thou, De Broc, that holdest Salt-
wood Castle——

De Broc. And mean to hold it, or——

Becket. To have my life.

De Broc. The King is quick to
anger ; if thou anger him,
We wait but the King's word to strike
thee dead.

Becket. Strike, and I die the death
of martyrdom ;
Strike, and ye set these customs by my
death

Ringing their own death-knell thro' all
the realm.

Herbert. And I can tell you, lords,
ye are all as like

To lodge a fear in Thomas Becket's heart
As find a hare's form in a lion's cave.

John of Oxford. Ay, sheathe your
swords, ye will displease the
King.

De Broc. Why down then thou ! but
an he come to Saltwood,
By God's death, thou shalt stick him
like a calf !

[*Sheathing his sword.*]

Hilary. O my good lord, I do entreat
thee—sign.

Save the King's honour here before his
barons.

He hath sworn that thou shouldst sign,
and now but shuns

The semblance of defeat ; I have heard
him say

He means no more ; so if thou sign, my
lord,

That were but as the shadow of an assent.

Becket. 'Twould seem too like the
substance, if I sign'd.

Philip de Eleemosyna. My lord, thine
ear ! I have the ear of the Pope.
As thou hast honour for the Pope our
master,

Have pity on him, sorely prest upon
By the fierce Emperor and his Antipope.
Thou knowest he was forced to fly to
France ;

He pray'd me to pray thee to pacify
Thy King ; for if thou go against thy
King,

Then must he likewise go against thy
King,

And then thy King might join the Anti-
pope,
And that would shake the Papacy as it
stands.

Besides, thy King swore to our cardinals
He meant no harm nor damage to the
Church.

Smooth thou his pride—thy signing is
but form ;

Nay, and should harm come of it, it is
the Pope

Will be to blame—not thou. Over and
over

He told me thou shouldst pacify the
King,

Lest there be battle between Heaven and
Earth,

And Earth should get the better—for the
time.

Cannot the Pope absolve thee if thou
sign ?

Becket. Have I the orders of the
Holy Father ?

Philip de Eleemosyna. Orders, my
lord—why, no ; for what am I ?

The secret whisper of the Holy Father.

Thou, that hast been a statesman, couldst
thou always

Blurt thy free mind to the air ?

Becket. If Rome be feeble, then
should I be firm.

Philip. Take it not that way—balk
not the Pope's will.

When he hath shaken off the Emperor,
He heads the Church against the King
with thee.

Richard de Hastings (kneeling).
Becket, I am the oldest of the
Templars ;

I knew thy father ; he would be mine age
Had he lived now ; think of me as thy
father !

Behold thy father kneeling to thee,
Becket.

Submit ; I promise thee on my salvation
That thou wilt hear no more o' the
customs.

Becket. What !

Hath Henry told thee ? hast thou talk'd
with him ?

Another Templar (kneeling). Father,
I am the youngest of the Temp-
lars,

Look on me as I were thy bodily son,
For, like a son, I lift my hands to thee.

Philip. Wilt thou hold out for ever,
Thomas Becket ?

Dost thou not hear ?

Becket (signs). Why—there then—
there—I sign,

And swear to obey the customs.

Foliot. Is it thy will,
My lord Archbishop, that we too should
sign ?

Becket. O ay, by that canonical
obedience

Thou still hast owed thy father, Gilbert
Foliot.

Foliot. Loyally and with good faith,
my lord Archbishop ?

Becket. O ay, with all that loyalty
and good faith

Thou still hast shown thy primate, Gilbert
Foliot.

[*Becket draws apart with Herbert.*

Herbert, Herbert, have I betray'd the
Church ?

I'll have the paper back—blot out my
name.

Herbert. Too late, my lord : you see
they are signing there.

Becket. False to myself—it is the will
of God

To break me, prove me nothing of my-
self !

This Almoner hath tasted Henry's gold.
The cardinals have finger'd Henry's gold.
And Rome is venal ev'n to rottenness.

I see it, I see it.

I am no soldier, as he said—at least
No leader. Herbert, till I hear from the
Pope

I will suspend myself from all my func-
tions.

If fast and prayer, the lacerating
scourge—

Foliot (from the table). My lord
Archbishop, thou hast yet to seal.

Becket. First, Foliot, let me see what
I have sign'd. [*Goes to the table.*

What, this ! and this !—what ! new and old together !

Seal ? If a seraph shouted from the sun,

And bad me seal against the rights of the Church,

I would anathematise him. I will not seal. [*Exit with Herbert.*]

Enter KING HENRY

Henry. Where's Thomas ? hath he sign'd ? show me the papers ! Sign'd and not seal'd ! How's that ?

John of Oxford. He would not seal. And when he sign'd, his face was stormy-red—

Shame, wrath, I know not what. He sat down there

And dropt it in his hands, and then a paleness,

Like the wan twilight after sunset, crept Up even to the tonsure, and he groan'd, 'False to myself ! It is the will of God !'

Henry. God's will be what it will, the man shall seal,

Or I will seal his doom. My burgher's son—

Nay, if I cannot break him as the prelate, I'll crush him as the subject. Send for him back. [*Sits on his throne.*]

Barons and bishops of our realm of England,

After the nineteen winters of King Stephen—

A reign which was no reign, when none could sit

By his own hearth in peace ; when murder common

As nature's death, like Egypt's plague, had fill'd

All things with blood ; when every doorway blush'd,

Dash'd red with that unhallow'd passover ; When every baron ground his blade in blood ;

The household dough was kneaded up with blood ;

The millwheel turn'd in blood ; the wholesome plow

Lay rusting in the furrow's yellow weeds,

Till famine dwarf'd the race—I came, your King !

Nor dwelt alone, like a soft lord of the East,

In mine own hall, and sucking thro' fools' ears

The flatteries of corruption—went abroad Thro' all my counties, spied my people's ways ;

Yea, heard the churl against the baron—yea,

And did him justice ; sat in mine own courts

Judging my judges, that had found a King

Who ranged confusions, made the twilight day,

And struck a shape from out the vague, and law

From madness. And the event—our fallows till'd,

Much corn, repeopled towns, a realm again.

So far my course, albeit not glassy-smooth,

Had prosper'd in the main, but suddenly Jar'd on this rock. A cleric violated

The daughter of his host, and murder'd him.

Bishops—York, London, Chichester, Westminster—

Ye haled this tonsured devil into your courts ;

But since your canon will not let you take

Life for a life, ye but degraded him Where I had hang'd him. What doth

hard murder care For degradation ? and that made me

muse, Being bounden by my coronation oath To do men justice. Look to it, your

own selves ! Say that a cleric murder'd an archbishop,

What could ye do ? Degrade, imprison him—

Not death for death.

John of Oxford. But I, my liege, could swear,

To death for death.

Henry. And, looking thro' my reign,
I found a hundred ghastly murders done
By men, the scum and offal of the
Church;

Then, glancing thro' the story of this
realm,

I came on certain wholesome usages,
Lost in desuetude, of my grandsire's
day,

Good royal customs—had them written
fair

For John of Oxford here to read to you.

John of Oxford. And I can easily
swear to these as being

The King's will and God's will and jus-
tice; yet

I could but read a part to-day, be-
cause—

Fitzurse. Because my lord of Canter-
bury—

De Tracy. Ay,
This lord of Canterbury—

De Brito. As is his wont
Too much of late whene'er your royal
rights

Are mooted in our councils—

Fitzurse. —made an uproar.

Henry. And Becket had my bosom
on all this;

If ever man by bonds of gratefulness—

I raised him from the puddle of the
gutter,

I made him porcelain from the clay of
the city—

Thought that I knew him, err'd thro'
love of him,

Hoped, were he chosen archbishop,
Church and Crown,

Two sisters gliding in an equal dance,
Two rivers gently flowing side by side—

But no!

The bird that moults sings the same song
again,

The snake that sloughs comes out a snake
again.

Snake—ay, but he that lookt a fangless
one,

Issues a venomous adder.

For he, when having doff'd the Chancellor's
robe—

Flung the Great Seal of England in my
face—

Claim'd some of our crown lands for
Canterbury—

My comrade, boon companion, my co-
reveller,

The master of his master, the King's
king.—

God's eyes! I had meant to make him
all but king.

Chancellor-Archbishop, he might well
have sway'd

All England under Henry, the young
King,

When I was hence. What did the traitor
say?

False to himself, but ten-fold false to me!
The will of God—why, then it is my will—

Is he coming?

Messenger (entering). With a crowd
of worshippers,

And holds his cross before him thro' the
crowd,

As one that puts himself in sanctuary.

Henry. His cross!

Roger of York. His cross! I'll front
him, cross to cross.

[Exit Roger of York.]

Henry. His cross! it is the traitor
that imputes

Treachery to his King!

It is not safe for me to look upon him.

Away—with me!

[Goes in with his Barons to the
Council-Chamber, the door of which
is left open.]

*Enter BECKET, holding his cross of silver
before him. The BISHOPS come round
him.*

Hereford. The King will not abide
thee with thy cross.

Permit me, my good lord, to bear it for
thee,

Being thy chaplain.

Becket. No: it must protect me.

Herbert. As once he bore the stand-
ard of the Angles,

So now he bears the standard of the
angels.

Foliot. I am the Dean of the province : let me bear it.

Make not thy King a traitorous murderer.

Becket. Did not your barons draw their swords against me ?

Enter ROGER OF YORK, with his cross, advancing to Becket

Becket. Wherefore dost thou presume to bear thy cross,
Against the solemn ordinance from Rome,
Out of thy province ?

Roger of York. Why dost thou presume,
Arm'd with thy cross, to come before the King ?

If Canterbury bring his cross to court,
Let York bear his to mate with Canterbury.

Foliot (seizing hold of Becket's cross).
Nay, nay, my lord, thou must not brave the King.

Nay, let me have it. I will have it !

Becket. Away !
[*Flinging him off.*

Foliot. He fasts, they say, this mitred Hercules !

He fast ! is that an arm of fast ? My lord,

Hadst thou not sign'd, I had gone along with thee ;

But thou the shepherd hast betray'd the sheep,

And thou art perjured, and thou wilt not seal.

As Chancellor thou wast against the Church,

Now as Archbishop goest against the King ;

For, like a fool, thou know'st no middle way.

Ay, ay ! but art thou stronger than the King ?

Becket. Strong—not in mine own self, but Heaven ; true

To either function, holding it ; and thou Fast, scourge thyself, and mortify thy flesh,

Not spirit—thou remainest Gilbert Foliot,

A worldly follower of the worldly strong. I, bearing this great ensign, make it clear Under what Prince I fight.

Foliot. My lord of York,
Let us go in to the Council, where our bishops

And our great lords will sit in judgment on him.

Becket. Sons sit in judgment on their father !—then

The spire of Holy Church may prick the graves—

Her crypt among the stars. Sign ? seal ? I promised

The King to obey these customs, not yet written,

Saving mine order ; true too, that when written

I sign'd them—being a fool, as Foliot call'd me.

I hold not by my signing. Get ye hence, Tell what I say to the King.

[*Exeunt Hereford, Foliot, and other Bishops.*

Roger of York. The Church will hate thee. [*Exit.*

Becket. Serve my best friend and make him my worst foe ;

Fight for the Church, and set the Church against me !

Herbert. To be honest is to set all knaves against thee.

Ah ! Thomas, excommunicate them all !

Hereford (re-entering). I cannot brook the turmoil thou hast raised.

I would, my lord Thomas of Canterbury, Thou wert plain Thomas and not Canterbury,

Or that thou wouldst deliver Canterbury To our King's hands again, and be at peace.

Hilary (re-entering). For hath not thine ambition set the Church This day between the hammer and the anvil—

Faalty to the King, obedience to thyself ?

Herbert. What say the bishops ?

Hilary. Some have pleaded for him,

But the King rages—most are with the King ;

And some are reeds, that one time sway to the current,

And to the wind another. But we hold Thou art forsworn ; and no forsworn Archbishop

Shall helm the Church. We therefore place ourselves

Under the shield and safeguard of the Pope,

And cite thee to appear before the Pope, And answer thine accusers. . . . Art thou deaf ?

Becket. I hear you. [*Clash of arms.*]

Hilary. Dost thou hear those others ?

Becket. Ay !

Roger of York (re-entering). The King's ' God's eyes ! ' come now so thick and fast,

We fear that he may reave thee of thine own.

Come on, come on ! it is not fit for us To see the proud Archbishop mutilated. Say that he blind thee and tear out thy tongue.

Becket. So be it. He begins at top with me :

They crucified St. Peter downward.

Roger of York. Nay,

But for their sake who stagger betwixt thine

Appeal, and Henry's anger, yield.

Becket. Hence, Satan !

[*Exit Roger of York.*]

Fitzurse (re-entering). My lord, the King demands three hundred marks,

Due from his castles of Berkhamstead and Eye

When thou thereof wast warden.

Becket. Tell the King

I spent thrice that in fortifying his castles.

De Tracy (re-entering). My lord, the King demands seven hundred marks,

Lent at the siege of Thoulouse by the King.

Becket. I led seven hundred knights and fought his wars.

De Brito (re-entering). My lord, the King demands five hundred marks,

Advanced thee at his instance by the Jews,

For which the King was bound security.

Becket. I thought it was a gift ; I thought it was a gift.

Enter LORD LEICESTER (followed by BARONS and BISHOPS)

Leicester. My lord, I come unwillingly. The King

Demands a strict account of all those revenues

From all the vacant sees and abbacies, Which came into thy hands when Chancellor.

Becket. How much might that amount to, my lord Leicester ?

Leicester. Some thirty—forty thousand silver marks.

Becket. Are these your customs ? O my good lord Leicester,

The King and I were brothers. All I had

I lavish'd for the glory of the King ; I shone from him, for him, his glory, his Reflection : now the glory of the Church Hath swallow'd up the glory of the King ; I am his no more, but hers. Grant me one day

To ponder these demands.

Leicester. Hear first thy sentence !

The King and all his lords——

Becket. Son, first hear me !

Leicester. Nay, nay, canst thou, that holdest thine estates

In fee and barony of the King, decline The judgment of the King ?

Becket. The King ! I hold Nothing in fee and barony of the King. Whatever the Church owns—she holds it in Free and perpetual alms, unsubject to One earthly sceptre.

Leicester. Nay, but hear thy judgment. The King and all his barons——

Becket. Judgment ! Barons ! Who but the bridegroom dares to judge the bride,

Or he the bridegroom may appoint? Not
he

That is not of the house, but from the
street

Stain'd with the mire thereof.

I had been so true
To Henry and mine office that the King
Would throne me in the great Arch-
bishoprick:

And I, that knew mine own infirmity,
For the King's pleasure rather than God's
cause

Took it upon me—err'd thro' love of
him.

Now therefore God from me withdraws
Himself,

And the King too.

What! forty thousand marks!
Why thou, the King, the Pope, the
Saints, the world,

Know that when made Archbishop I was
freed,

Before the Prince and chief Justiciary,
From every bond and debt and obliga-
tion

Incurr'd as Chancellor.

Hear me, son.

As gold
Outvalues dross, light darkness, Abel
Cain,

The soul the body, and the Church the
Throne,

I charge thee, upon pain of mine ana-
thema,

That thou obey, not me, but God in me,
Rather than Henry. I refuse to stand

By the King's censure, make my cry to
the Pope,

By whom I will be judged; refer myself,
The King, these customs, all the Church,
to him,

And under his authority—I depart.

[*Going.*]

[*Leicester looks at him doubtingly.*]

Am I a prisoner?

Leicester. By St. Lazarus, no!

I am confounded by thee. Go in peace.

De Broc. In peace now—but after.

Take that for earnest.

[*Flings a bone at him from the rushes.*]

*De Brito, Fitzurse, De Tracy, and
others (flinging wisps of rushes).* Ay,
go in peace, caitiff, caitiff! And that
too, perjured prelate—and that, turncoat
shaveling! There, there, there! traitor,
traitor, traitor!

Becket. Mannerless wolves!

[*Turning and facing them.*]

Herbert. Enough, my lord, enough!

Becket. Barons of England and of
Normandy,

When what ye shake at doth but seem to
fly,

True test of coward, ye follow with a yell.
But I that threw the mightiest knight of

France,

Sir Engelram de Trie,—

Herbert. Enough, my lord.

Becket. More than enough. I play
the fool again.

Enter HERALD

Herald. The King commands you,
upon pain of death,
That none should wrong or injure your
Archbishop.

Foliot. Deal gently with the young
man Absalom.

[*Great doors of the Hall at the back
open, and discover a crowd. They
shout:*]

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of
the Lord!

SCENE IV.—REFECTORY OF THE MONASTERY AT NORTHAMPTON

A banquet on the Tables

Enter BECKET. BECKET'S RETAINERS

1st Retainer. Do thou speak first.

2nd Retainer. Nay, thou! Nay,
thou! Hast not thou drawn the short
straw?

1st Retainer. My lord Archbishop,
wilt thou permit us—

Becket. To speak without stammering
and like a free man? Ay.

1st Retainer. My lord, permit us
then to leave thy service.

Becket. When?

1st Retainer. Now.

Becket. To-night?

1st Retainer. To-night, my lord.

Becket. And why?

1st Retainer. My lord, we leave thee not without tears.

Becket. Tears? Why not stay with me then?

1st Retainer. My lord, we cannot yield thee an answer altogether to thy satisfaction.

Becket. I warrant you, or your own either. Shall I find you one? The King hath frowned upon me.

1st Retainer. That is not altogether our answer, my lord.

Becket. No; yet all but all. Go, go! Ye have eaten of my dish and drunken of my cup for a dozen years.

1st Retainer. And so we have. We mean thee no wrong. Wilt thou not say, 'God bless you,' ere we go?

Becket. God bless you all! God redden your pale blood! But mine is human-red; and when ye shall hear it is poured out upon earth, and see it mounting to Heaven, my God bless you, that seems sweet to you now, will blast and blind you like a curse.

1st Retainer. We hope not, my lord. Our humblest thanks for your blessing. Farewell! [*Exeunt Retainers.*]

Becket. Farewell, friends! farewell, swallows! I wrong the bird; she leaves only the nest she built, they leave the builder. Why? Am I to be murdered to-night? [*Knocking at the door.*]

Attendant. Here is a missive left at the gate by one from the castle.

Becket. Cornwall's hand or Leicester's: they write marvellously alike.

[*Reading.*]

'Fly at once to France, to King Louis of France: there be those about our King who would have thy blood.'

Was not my lord of Leicester bidden to our supper?

Attendant. Ay, my lord, and divers

other earls and barons. But the hour is past, and our brother, Master Cook, he makes moan that all be a-getting cold.

Becket. And I make my moan along with him. Cold after warm, winter after summer, and the golden leaves, these earls and barons, that clung to me, frosted off me by the first cold frown of the King. Cold, but look how the table steams, like a heathen altar; nay, like the altar at Jerusalem. Shall God's good gifts be wasted? None of them here! Call in the poor from the streets, and let them feast.

Herbert. That is the parable of our blessed Lord.

Becket. And why should not the parable of our blessed Lord be acted again? Call in the poor! The Church is ever at variance with the kings, and ever at one with the poor. I marked a group of lazars in the marketplace—half-rag, half-sore—beggars, poor rogues (Heaven bless 'em) who never saw nor dreamed of such a banquet. I will amaze them. Call them in, I say. They shall henceforward be my earls and barons—our lords and masters in Christ Jesus. [*Exit Herbert.*]

If the King hold his purpose, I am myself a beggar. Forty thousand marks! forty thousand devils—and these craven bishops!

A POOR MAN (entering) with his dog

My lord Archbishop, may I come in with my poor friend, my dog? The King's verdurer caught him a-hunting in the forest, and cut off his paws. The dog followed his calling, my lord. I ha' carried him ever so many miles in my arms, and he licks my face and moans and cries out against the King.

Becket. Better thy dog than thee. The King's courts would use thee worse than thy dog—they are too bloody. Were the Church king, it would be otherwise. Poor beast! poor beast! set him down. I will bind up his

wounds with my napkin. Give him a bone, give him a bone! Who misuses a dog would misuse a child—they cannot speak for themselves. Past help! his paws are past help. God help him!

Enter the BEGGARS (and seat themselves at the Tables). BECKET and HERBERT wait upon them.

1st Beggar. Swine, sheep, ox—here's a French supper. When thieves fall out, honest men—

2nd Beggar. Is the Archbishop a thief who gives thee thy supper?

1st Beggar. Well, then, how does it go? When honest men fall out, thieves—no, it can't be that.

2nd Beggar. Who stole the widow's one sitting hen o' Sunday, when she was at mass?

1st Beggar. Come, come! thou hadst thy share on her. Sitting hen! Our Lord Becket's our great sitting-hen cock, and we shouldn't ha' been sitting here if the barons and bishops hadn't been a-sitting on the Archbishop.

Becket. Ay, the princes sat in judgment against me, and the Lord hath prepared your table—*Sederunt principes, ederunt pauperes.*

A Voice. Becket, beware of the knife!

Becket. Who spoke?

3rd Beggar. Nobody, my lord. What's that, my lord?

Becket. Venison.

3rd Beggar. Venison?

Becket. Buck; deer, as you call it.

3rd Beggar. King's meat! By the Lord, won't we pray for your lordship!

Becket. And, my children, your prayers will do more for me in the day of peril that dawns darkly and drearily over the house of God—yea, and in the day of judgment also, than the swords of the craven sycophants would have done had they remained true to me whose bread they have partaken. I must leave you to your banquet. Feed, feast, and be merry. Herbert, for the sake of the

Church itself, if not for my own, I must fly to France to-night. Come with me.

[Exit with Herbert.]

3rd Beggar. Here—all of you—my lord's health (*they drink*). Well—if that isn't goodly wine—

1st Beggar. Then there isn't a goodly wench to serve him with it: they were fighting for her to-day in the street.

3rd Beggar. Peace!

1st Beggar. The black sheep baaed to the miller's ewe lamb, The miller's away for to-night. Black sheep, quoth she, too black a sin for me.

And what said the black sheep, my masters?

We can make a black sin white.

3rd Beggar. Peace!

1st Beggar. 'Ewe lamb, ewe lamb, I am here by the dam.'

But the miller came home that night, And so dusted his back with the meal in his sack,

That he made the black sheep white.

3rd Beggar. Be we not of the family? be we not a-supping with the head of the family? be we not in my lord's own refractory? Out from among us; thou art our black sheep.

Enter the four KNIGHTS

Fitzurse. Sheep, said he? And sheep without the shepherd, too. Where is my lord Archbishop? Thou the lustiest and lousiest of this Cain's brotherhood, answer.

3rd Beggar. With Cain's answer, my lord. Am I his keeper? Thou shouldst call him Cain, not me.

Fitzurse. So I do, for he would murder his brother the State.

3rd Beggar (rising and advancing). No, my lord; but because the Lord hath set his mark upon him that no man should murder him.

Fitzurse. Where is he? where is he?

3rd Beggar. With Cain belike, in the land of Nod, or in the land of France for aught I know.

Fitzurse. France! Ha! De Morville, Tracy, Brito—fled is he? Cross swords all of you! swear to follow him! Remember the Queen!

[*The four Knights cross their swords.*

De Brito. They mock us; he is here.

[*All the Beggars rise and advance upon them.*

Fitzurse. Come, you filthy knaves, let us pass.

3rd Beggar. Nay, my lord, let us pass. We be a-going home after our supper in all humbleness, my lord; for the Archbishop loves humbleness, my lord; and though we be fifty to four, we daren't fight you with our crutches, my lord. There now, if thou hast not laid hands upon me! and my fellows know that I am all one scale like a fish. I pray God I haven't given thee my leprosy, my lord.

[*Fitzurse shrinks from him and another presses upon De Brito.*

De Brito. Away, dog!

4th Beggar. And I was bit by a mad dog o' Friday, an' I be half dog already by this token, that tho' I can drink wine I cannot bide water, my lord; and I want to bite, I want to bite, and they do say the very breath catches.

De Brito. Insolent clown. Shall I smite him with the edge of the sword?

De Morville. No, nor with the flat of it either. Smite the shepherd and the sheep are scattered. Smite the sheep and the shepherd will excommunicate thee.

De Brito. Yet my fingers itch to beat him into nothing.

5th Beggar. So do mine, my lord. I was born with it, and sulphur won't bring it out o' me. But for all that the Archbishop washed my feet o' Tuesday. He likes it, my lord.

6th Beggar. And see here, my lord, this rag fro' the gangrene i' my leg. It's humbling—it smells o' human natur'. Wilt thou smell it, my lord? for the Archbishop likes the smell on it, my lord; for I be his lord and master i' Christ, my lord.

De Morville. Faugh! we shall all be poisoned. Let us go.

[*They draw back, Beggars following.*

7th Beggar. My lord, I ha' three sisters a-dying at home o' the sweating sickness. They be dead while I be a supping.

8th Beggar. And I ha' nine darters i' the spital that be dead ten times o'er i' one day wi' the putrid fever; and I bring the taint on it along wi' me, for the Archbishop likes it, my lord.

[*Pressing upon the Knights till they disappear thro' the door.*

3rd Beggar. Crutches, and itches, and leprosy, and ulcers, and gangrenes, and running sores, praise ye the Lord, for to-night ye have saved our Archbishop!

1st Beggar. I'll go back again. I hain't half done yet.

Herbert of Bosham (entering). My friends, the Archbishop bids you good night. He hath retired to rest, and being in great jeopardy of his life, he hath made his bed between the altars, from whence he sends me to bid you this night pray for him who hath fed you in the wilderness.

3rd Beggar. So we will—so we will, I warrant thee. Becket shall be king, and the Holy Father shall be king, and the world shall live by the King's venison and the bread o' the Lord, and there shall be no more poor for ever Hurrah! Vive le Roy! That's the English of it.

ACT II

SCENE I.—ROSAMUND'S BOWER

A Garden of Flowers. In the midst a bank of wild-flowers with a bench before it.

Voices heard singing among the trees

Duet

1. Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear in the pine overhead?

2. No; but the voice of the deep as it hollows the cliffs of the land.

1. Is there a voice coming up with the voice of the deep from the strand,
One coming up with a song in the flush of the glimmering red?

2. Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.

1. Love that can shape or can shatter a life till the life shall have fled?

2. Nay, let us welcome him, Love that can lift up a life from the dead.

1. Keep him away from the lone little isle. Let us be, let us be.

2. Nay, let him make it his own, let him reign in it—he, it is he,
Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.

Enter HENRY and ROSAMUND

Rosamund. Be friends with him again—I do beseech thee.

Henry. With Becket? I have but one hour with thee—

Sceptre and crozier clashing, and the mitre

Grappling the crown—and when I flee from this

For a gasp of freer air, a breathing-while

To rest upon thy bosom and forget him—

Why thou, my bird, thou pipest Becket, Becket—

Yea, thou my golden dream of Love's own bower,

Must be the nightmare breaking on my peace

With 'Becket.'

Rosamund. O my life's life, not to smile

Is all but death to me. My sun, no cloud!

Let there not be one frown in this one hour.

Out of the many thine, let this be mine! Look rather thou all-royal as when first I met thee.

Henry. Where was that?

Rosamund. Forgetting that Forgets me too.

Henry. Nay, I remember it well. There on the moors.

Rosamund. And in a narrow path. A plover flew before thee. Then I saw Thy high black steed among the flaming furze,

Like sudden night in the main glare of day.

And from that height something was said to me

I knew not what.

Henry. I ask'd the way.

Rosamund. I think so. So I lost mine.

Henry. Thou wast too shamed to answer.

Rosamund. Too scared—so young!

Henry. The rosebud of my rose!—Well, well, no more of *him*—I have sent his folk,

His kin, all his belongings, overseas; Age, orphans, and babe-breasting mothers—all

By hundreds to him—there to beg, starve, die—

So that the fool King Louis feed them not.

The man shall feel that I can strike him yet.

Rosamund. Babes, orphans, mothers! is that royal, Sire?

Henry. And I have been as royal with the Church.

He shelter'd in the Abbey of Pontigny.

There wore his time studying the canon law

To work it against me. But since he cursed

My friends at Veselay, I have let them know,

That if they keep him longer as their guest,

I scatter all their crows to all the hells.

Rosamund. And is that altogether royal?

Henry. Traitress!

Rosamund. A faithful traitress to thy royal fame.

Henry. Fame! what care I for fame! Spite, ignorance, envy,

Yea, honesty too, paint her what way
they will.

Fame of to-day is infamy to-morrow ;
Infamy of to-day is fame to-morrow ;
And round and round again. What
matters? Royal—

I mean to leave the royalty of my crown
Unlessen'd to mine heirs.

Rosamund. Still—thy fame too :
I say that should be royal.

Henry. And I say,
I care not for thy saying.

Rosamund. And I say,
I care not for *thy* saying. A greater
King

Than thou art, Love, who cares not for
the word,

Makes 'care not'—care. There have I
spoken true?

Henry. Care dwell with me for ever,
when I cease

To care for thee as ever !

Rosamund. No need ! no need ! . . .
There is a bench. Come, wilt thou sit ?
. . . My bank

Of wild-flowers [*he sits*]. At thy feet !
[*She sits at his feet.*]

Henry. I bad them clear
A royal pleasance for thee, in the wood,
Not leave these countryfolk at court.

Rosamund. I brought them
In from the wood, and set them here. I
love them

More than the garden flowers, that seem
at most

Sweet guests, or foreign cousins, not half
speaking

The language of the land. I love *them*
too,

Yes. But, my liege, I am sure, of all
the roses—

Shame fall on those who gave it a dog's
name—

This wild one (*picking a briar-rose*)—
nay, I shall not prick myself—

Is sweetest. Do but smell !

Henry. Thou rose of the world !
Thou rose of all the roses ! [*Muttering.*]

I am not worthy of her—this beast-
body

That God has plunged my soul in—I,
that taking

The Fiend's advantage of a throne, so
long

Have wander'd among women,—a foul
stream

Thro' fever-breeding levels,—at her side,
Among these happy dales, run clearer,

drop
The mud I carried, like yon brook, and
glass

The faithful face of heaven—
[*Looking at her, and unconsciously aloud,*

—thine ! thine !
Rosamund. I know it.

Henry (*muttering*). Not hers. We
have but one bond, her hate of
Becket.

Rosamund (*half hearing*). Nay ! nay !
what art thou muttering ? I hate
Becket?

Henry (*muttering*). A sane and
natural loathing for a soul

Purer, and truer and nobler than herself :
And mine a bitterer illegitimate hate,

A bastard hate born of a former love.
Rosamund. My fault to name him !

O let the hand of one
To whom thy voice is all her music, stay it

But for a breath.
[*Puts her hand before his lips.*]

Speak only of thy love.
Why there—like some loud beggar at

thy gate—
The happy boldness of this hand hath

won it
Love's alms, thy kiss (*looking at her hand*)

—Sacred ! I'll kiss it too.
[*Kissing it.*]

There ! wherefore dost thou so peruse it ?
Nay,

There may be crosses in my line of life.
Henry. Not half *her* hand—no hand

to mate with *her*,
If it should come to that.

Rosamund. With her ? with whom ?
Henry. Life on the hand is naked

gipsy-stuff ;
Life on the face, the brows—clear inno-
cence !

Vein'd marble—not a furrow yet—and
hers [Muttering.]

Croft and recrost, a venomous spider's
web——

Rosamund (springing up). Out of the
cloud, my Sun—out of the eclipse
Narrowing my golden hour!

Henry. O Rosamund,
I would be true—would tell thee all—and
something

I had to say—I love thee none the less—
Which will so vex thee.

Rosamund. Something against me?

Henry. No, no, against myself.

Rosamund. I will not hear it.
Come, come, mine hour! I bargain for
mine hour.

I'll call thee little Geoffrey.

Henry. Call him!

Rosamund. Geoffrey!

Enter GEOFFREY

Henry. How the boy grows!

Rosamund. Ay, and his brows are
thine;

The mouth is only Clifford, my dear
father.

Geoffrey. My liege, what hast thou
brought me?

Henry. Venal imp!

What say'st thou to the Chancellorship of
England?

Geoffrey. O yes, my liege.

Henry. 'O yes, my liege!' He
speaks

As if it were a cake of gingerbread.

Dost thou know, my boy, what it is to
be Chancellor of England?

Geoffrey. Something good, or thou
wouldst not give it me.

Henry. It is, my boy, to side with
the King when Chancellor, and then to
be made Archbishop and go against the
King who made him, and turn the world
upside down.

Geoffrey. I won't have it then. Nay,
but give it me, and I promise thee not to
turn the world upside down.

Henry (giving him a ball). Here is a
ball, my boy, thy world, to turn anyway

and play with as thou wilt—which is more
than I can do with mine. Go try it, play.
[Exit Geoffrey.]

A pretty lusty boy.

Rosamund. So like to thee;

Like to be liker.

Henry. Not in my chin, I hope!
That threatens double.

Rosamund. Thou art manlike
perfect.

Henry. Ay, ay, no doubt; and were
I hump't behind,
Thou'dst say as much—the goodly way
of women

Who love, for which I love them. May
God grant

No ill befall or him or thee when I
Am gone.

Rosamund. Is he thy enemy?

Henry. He? who? ay!

Rosamund. Thine enemy knows the
secret of my bower.

Henry. And I could tear him asunder
with wild horses
Before he would betray it. Nay—no
fear!

More like is he to excommunicate me.

Rosamund. And I would creep, crawl
over knife-edge flint

Barefoot, a hundred leagues, to stay his
hand

Before he flash'd the bolt.

Henry. And when he flash'd it
Shrink from me, like a daughter of the
Church.

Rosamund. Ay, but he will not.

Henry. Ay! but if he did?

Rosamund. O then! O then! I
almost fear to say

That my poor heretic heart would ex-
communicate

His excommunication, clinging to thee
Closer than ever.

*Henry (raising Rosamund and kissing
her).* My brave-hearted Rose!
Hath he ever been to see thee?

Rosamund. Here? not he.
And it is so lonely here—no confessor.

Henry. Thou shalt confess all thy
sweet sins to me.

Rosamund. Besides, we came away
in such a heat,
I brought not ev'n my crucifix.

Henry. Take this.
[*Giving her the Crucifix which Eleanor gave him.*]

Rosamund. O beautiful! May I have
it as mine, till mine
Be mine again?

Henry (*throwing it round her neck*).
Thine—as I am—till death!

Rosamund. Death? no! I'll have it
with me in my shroud,
And wake with it, and show it to all the
Saints.

Henry. Nay—I must go; but when
thou layest thy lip
To this, remembering One who died for
thee,

Remember also one who lives for thee
Out there in France; for I must hence
to brave

The Pope, King Louis, and this turbulent
priest.

Rosamund (*kneeling*). O by thy love
for me, all mine for thee,
Fling not thy soul into the flames of hell:
I kneel to thee—be friends with him
again.

Henry. Look, look! if little Geoffrey
have not tost
His ball into the brook! makes after it too
To find it. Why, the child will drown
himself.

Rosamund. Geoffrey! Geoffrey!
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—MONTMIRAIL

'*The Meeting of the Kings.*' JOHN OF
OXFORD and HENRY. *Crowd in the
distance.*

John of Oxford. You have not crown'd
young Henry yet, my liege?

Henry. Crown'd! by God's eyes, we
will not have him crown'd.
I spoke of late to the boy, he answer'd
me,
As if he wore the crown already—No,

We will not have him crown'd.

'Tis true what Becket told me, that the
mother

Would make him play his kingship
against mine.

John of Oxford. Not have him
crown'd?

Henry. Not now—not yet! and

Becket—

Becket should crown him were he crown'd
at all:

But, since we would be lord of our own
manor,

This Canterbury, like a wounded deer,
Has fled our presence and our feeding-
grounds.

John of Oxford. Cannot a smooth
tongue lick him whole again

To serve your will?

Henry. He hates my will, not me.

John of Oxford. There's York, my
liege.

Henry. But England scarce would
hold

Young Henry king, if only crown'd by
York,

And that would stilt up York to twice
himself.

There is a movement yonder in the
crowd—

See if our pious—what shall I call him,
John?—

Husband-in-law, our smooth-shorn suze-
rain,

Be yet within the field.

John of Oxford. I will. [*Exit.*]

Henry. Ay! Ay!

Mince and go back! his politic Holiness
Hath all but climb'd the Roman perch
again,

And we shall hear him presently with
clapt wing

Crow over Barbarossa—at last tongue-
free

To blast my realms with excommunication
And interdict. I must patch up a peace—

A piece in this long-tugged-at, threadbare-
worn

Quarrel of Crown and Church—to rend
again.

His Holiness cannot steer straight thro'
 shoals,
 Nor I. The citizen's heir hath conquer'd
 me
 For the moment. So we make our
 peace with him.

Enter LOUIS

Brother of France, what shall be done
 with Becket?

Louis. The holy Thomas! Brother,
 you have traffick'd
 Between the Emperor and the Pope,
 between

The Pope and Antipope—a perilous game
 For men to play with God.

Henry. Ay, ay, good brother,
 They call you the Monk-King.

Louis. Who calls me? she
 That was my wife, now yours? You
 have her Duchy,
 The point you aim'd at, and pray God
 she prove

True wife to you. You have had the
 better of us

In secular matters.

Henry. Come, confess, good brother,
 You did your best or worst to keep her
 Duchy.

Only the golden Leopard printed in it
 Such hold-fast claws that you perforce
 again

Shrank into France. Tut, tut! did we
 convene

This conference but to babble of our wives?
 They are plagues enough in-door.

Louis. We fought in the East,
 And felt the sun of Antioch scald our mail,
 And push'd our lances into Saracen
 hearts.

We never hounded on the State at home
 To spoil the Church.

Henry. How should you see this
 rightly?

Louis. Well, well, no more! I am
 proud of my 'Monk-King,'
 Whoever named me; and, brother, Holy
 Church

May rock, but will not wreck, nor our
 Archbishop

Stagger on the slope decks for any rough
 sea

Blown by the breath of kings. We do
 forgive you

For aught you wrought against us.

[*Henry holds up his hand.*]

Nay, I pray you,
 Do not defend yourself. You will do
 much

To rake out all old dying heats, if you,
 At my requesting, will but look into
 The wrongs you did him, and restore his
 kin,

Reseat him on his throne of Canterbury,
 Be, both, the friends you were.

Henry. The friends we were!
 Co-mates we were, and had our sport
 together,

Co-kings we were, and made the laws
 together.

The world had never seen the like before.
 You are too cold to know the fashion of
 it.

Well, well, we will be gentle with him,
 gracious—

Most gracious.

*Enter BECKET, after him, JOHN OF
 OXFORD, ROGER OF YORK, GILBERT
 FOLIOT, DE BROU, FITZURSE, etc.*

Only that the rift he made
 May close between us, here I am wholly
 king,

The word should come from him.

Becket (kneeling). Then, my dear liege,
 I here deliver all this controversy
 Into your royal hands.

Henry. Ah, Thomas, Thomas,
 Thou art thyself again, Thomas again.

Becket (rising). Saving God's honour!

Henry. Out upon thee, man!
 Saving the Devil's honour, his yes and no.
 Knights, bishops, earls, this London
 spawn—by Mahound,

I had sooner have been born a Mussul-
 man—

Less clashing with their priests—
 I am half-way down the slope—will no
 man stay me?

I dash myself to pieces—I stay myself—

Puff—it is gone. You, Master Becket, you
That owe to me your power over me—
Nay, nay—

Brother of France, you have taken,
cherish'd him

Who thief-like fled from his own church
by night,

No man pursuing. I would have had
him back.

Take heed he do not turn and rend you
too :

For whatsoever may displease him—that
Is clean against God's honour—a shift, a
trick

Whereby to challenge, face me out of all
My regal rights. Yet, yet—that none
may dream

I go against God's honour—ay, or him-
self

In any reason, choose

A hundred of the wisest heads from
England,

A hundred, too, from Normandy and
Anjou :

Let these decide on what was customary
In olden days, and all the Church of
France

Decide on their decision, I am content.
More, what the mightiest and the holiest
Of all his predecessors may have done
Ev'n to the least and meanest of my own,
Let him do the same to me—I am con-
tent.

Louis. Ay, ay ! the King humbles
himself enough.

Becket. (*Aside*) Words ! he will
wriggle out of them like an eel
When the time serves. (*Aloud*) My
lieges and my lords,
The thanks of Holy Church are due to
those

That went before us for their work, which
we

Inheriting reap an easier harvest.
Yet——

Louis. My lord, will you be greater
than the Saints,
More than St. Peter ? whom——what is
it you doubt ?

Behold your peace at hand.

Becket.

I say that those
Who went before us did not wholly clear
The deadly growths of earth, which
Hell's own heat

So dwelt on that they rose and darken'd
Heaven.

Yet they did much. Would God they
had torn up all

By the hard root, which shoots again ;
our trial

Had so been less ; but, seeing they were
men

Defective or excessive, must we follow
All that they overdid or underdid ?

Nay, if they were defective as St. Peter
Denying Christ, who yet defied the
tyrant,

We hold by his defiance, not his defect.
O good son Louis, do not counsel me,

No, to suppress God's honour for the sake
Of any king that breathes. No, God
forbid !

Henry. No ! God forbid ! and turn
me Mussulman !

No God but one, and Mahound is his
prophet.

But for your Christian, look you, you
shall have

None other God but me—me, Thomas,
son

Of Gilbert Becket, London merchant.
Out !

I hear no more. [*Exit.*

Louis. Our brother's anger puts him,
Poor man, beside himself—not wise.
My lord,

We have claspt your cause, believing
that our brother

Had wrong'd you ; but this day he
proffer'd peace.

You will have war ; and tho' we grant
the Church

King over this world's kings, yet, my
good lord,

We that are kings are something in this
world,

And so we pray you, draw yourself from
under

The wings of France. We shelter you
no more. [*Exit.*

John of Oxford. I am glad that France hath scouted him at last : I told the Pope what manner of man he was. *[Exit.*

Roger of York. Yea, since he flouts the will of either realm, Let either cast him away like a dead dog ! *[Exit.*

Foliot. Yea, let a stranger spoil his heritage, And let another take his bishoprick ! *[Exit.*

De Broc. Our castle, my lord, belongs to Canterbury.

I pray you come and take it. *[Exit.*

Fitzurse. When you will. *[Exit.*

Becket. Cursed be John of Oxford, Roger of York, And Gilbert Foliot ! cursed those De Brocs

That hold our Saltwood Castle from our see !

Cursed Fitzurse, and all the rest of them That sow this hate between my lord and me !

Voices from the Crowd. Blessed be the Lord Archbishop, who hath withstood two Kings to their faces for the honour of God.

Becket. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, praise !

I thank you, sons ; when kings but hold by crowns,

The crowd that hungers for a crown in Heaven

Is my true king.

Herbert. Thy true King bad thee be A fisher of men ; thou hast them in thy net.

Becket. I am too like the King here ; both of us

Too headlong for our office. Better have been

A fisherman at Bosham, my good Herbert, Thy birthplace—the sea-creek—the petty rill

That falls into it—the green field—the gray church—

The simple lobster-basket, and the mesh—

The more or less of daily labour done— The pretty gaping bills in the home-nest Piping for bread—the daily want supplied—

The daily pleasure to supply it.

Herbert. Ah, Thomas,

You had not borne it, no, not for a day.

Becket. Well, maybe, no.

Herbert. But bear with Walter Map, For here he comes to comment on the time.

Enter WALTER MAP

Walter Map. Pity, my lord, that you have quenched the warmth of France toward you, tho' His Holiness, after much smouldering and smoking, be kindled again upon your quarter.

Becket. Ay, if he do not end in smoke again.

Walter Map. My lord, the fire, when first kindled, said to the smoke, 'Go up, my son, straight to Heaven.' And the smoke said, 'I go' ; but anon the North-east took and turned him South-west, then the South-west turned him North-east, and so of the other winds ; but it was in him to go up straight if the time had been quieter. Your lordship affects the unwavering perpendicular ; but His Holiness, pushed one way by the Empire and another by England, if he move at all, Heaven stay him, is fain to diagonalise.

Herbert. Diagonalise ! thou art a word-monger.

Our Thomas never will diagonalise.

Thou art a jester and a verse-maker.

Diagonalise !

Walter Map. Is the world any the worse for my verses if the Latin rhymes be rolled out from a full mouth ? or any harm done to the people if my jest be in defence of the Truth ?

Becket. Ay, if the jest be so done that the people Delight to wallow in the grossness of it, Till Truth herself be shamed of her defender.

Non defensoribus istis, Walter Map.

Walter Map. Is that my case? so if the city be sick, and I cannot call the kennel sweet, your lordship would suspend me from verse-writing, as you suspended yourself after sub-writing to the customs.

Becket. I pray God pardon mine infirmity.

Walter Map. Nay, my lord, take heart; for tho' you suspended yourself, the Pope let you down again; and tho' you suspend Foliot or another, the Pope will not leave them in suspense, for the Pope himself is always in suspense, like Mahound's coffin hung between heaven and earth—always in suspense, like the scales, till the weight of Germany or the gold of England brings one of them down to the dust—always in suspense, like the tail of the horologe—to and fro—tick-tack—we make the time, we keep the time, ay, and we serve the time; for I have heard say that if you boxed the Pope's ears with a purse, you might stagger him, but he would pocket the purse. No saying of mine—Jocelyn of Salisbury. But the King hath bought half the College of Redhats. He warmed to you to-day, and you have chilled him again. Yet you both love God. Agree with him quickly again, even for the sake of the Church. My one grain of good counsel which you will not swallow. I hate a split between old friendships as I hate the dirty gap in the face of a Cistercian monk, that will swallow anything. Farewell. [*Exit.*]

Becket. Map scoffs at Rome. I all but hold with Map. Save for myself no Rome were left in England, All had been his. Why should this Rome, this Rome, Still choose Barabbas rather than the Christ, Absolve the left-hand thief and damn the right? Take fees of tyranny, wink at sacrilege, Whicheven Peter had not dared? condemn The blameless exile?—

Herbert. Thee, thou holy Thomas! I would that thou hadst been the Holy Father.

Becket. I would have done my most to keep Rome holy, I would have made Rome know she still is Rome—

Who stands aghast at her eternal self And shakes at mortal kings—her vacillation,

Avarice, craft—O God, how many an innocent

Has left his bones upon the way to Rome Unwept, uncared for. Yea—on mine own self

The King had had no power except for Rome.

'Tis not the King who is guilty of mine exile,

But Rome, Rome, Rome!

Herbert. My lord, I see this Louis Returning, ah! to drive thee from his realm.

Becket. He said as much before. Thou art no prophet, Nor yet a prophet's son.

Herbert. Whatever he say, Deny not thou God's honour for a king. The King looks troubled.

Re-enter KING LOUIS

Louis. My dear lord Archbishop, I learn but now that those poor Poitevins,

That in thy cause were stirr'd against King Henry,

Have been, despite his kingly promise given

To our own self of pardon, evilly used And put to pain. I have lost all trust in him.

The Church alone hath eyes—and now I see

That I was blind—suffer the phrase—surrendering

God's honour to the pleasure of a man. Forgive me and absolve me, holy father.

[*Kneels.*]

Becket. Son, I absolve thee in the name of God.

Louis (rising). Return to Sens, where we will care for you.

The wine and wealth of all our France are yours ;

Rest in our realm, and be at peace with all. [*Exeunt.*]

Voices from the Crowd. Long live the good King Louis ! God bless the great Archbishop !

Re-enter HENRY and JOHN OF OXFORD

Henry (looking after King Louis and Becket). Ay, there they go—both backs are turn'd to me—

Why then I strike into my former path
For England, crown young Henry there,
and make

Our waning Eleanor all but love me !

John,
Thou hast served me heretofore with Rome—and well.

They call thee John the Swearer.

John of Oxford. For this reason,
That, being ever duteous to the King,
I evermore have sworn upon his side,
And ever mean to do it.

Henry (claps him on the shoulder).

Honest John !

To Rome again ! the storm begins again.
Spare not thy tongue ! be lavish with
our coins,

Threaten our junction with the Emperor
—flatter

And fright the Pope—bribe all the Cardinals—leave

Lateran and Vatican in one dust of gold—
Swear and unswear, state and misstate
thy best !

I go to have young Henry crown'd by
York.

ACT III

SCENE I.—THE BOWER

HENRY and ROSAMUND

Henry. All that you say is just. I cannot answer it
Till better times, when I shall put
away—

Rosamund. What will you put away ?

Henry. That which you ask me
Till better times. Let it content you
now

There is no woman that I love so well.

Rosamund. No woman but should be content with that—

Henry. And one fair child to fondle !

Rosamund. O yes, the child
We waited for so long—heaven's gift at
last—

And how you doated on him then ! To-day

I almost fear'd your kiss was colder—yes—

But then the child *is* such a child. What chance

That he should ever spread into the man
Here in our silence ? I have done my
best.

I am not learn'd.

Henry. I am the King, his father,
And I will look to it. Is our secret ours ?
Have you had any alarm ? no stranger ?

Rosamund. No.
The warder of the bower hath given
himself

Of late to wine. I sometimes think he
sleeps

When he should watch ; and yet what
fear ? the people

Believe the wood enchanted. No one
comes,

Nor foe nor friend ; his fond excess of
wine

Springs from the loneliness of my poor
bower,

Which weighs even on me.

Henry. Yet these tree-towers,
Their long bird-echoing minster-aisles,—
the voice

Of the perpetual brook, these golden
slopes

Of Solomon-shaming flowers—that was
your saying,

All pleased you so at first.

Rosamund. Not now so much.
My Anjou bower was scarce as beautiful.
But you were oftener there. I have
none but you.

The brook's voice is not yours, and no
flower, not
The sun himself, should he be changed
to one,
Could shine away the darkness of that
gap
Left by the lack of love.

Henry. The lack of love !

Rosamund. Of one we love. Nay, I
would not be bold,

Yet hoped ere this you might——

[*Looks earnestly at him.*]

Henry. Anything further ?

Rosamund. Only my best bower-
maiden died of late,

And that old priest whom John of Salis-
bury trusted

Hath sent another.

Henry. Secret ?

Rosamund. I but ask'd her
One question, and she prim'd her
mouth and put

Her hands together—thus—and said,
God help her,

That she was sworn to silence.

Henry. What did you ask her ?

Rosamund. Some daily something—
nothing.

Henry. Secret, then ?

Rosamund. I do not love her. Must
you go, my liege,

So suddenly ?

Henry. I came to England suddenly,
And on a great occasion sure to wake
As great a wrath in Becket——

Rosamund. Always Becket !
He always comes between us.

Henry. —And to meet it
I needs must leave as suddenly. It is
raining,

Put on your hood and see me to the
bounds. [*Exeunt.*]

Margery (singing behind scene).

Babble in bower

Under the rose !

Bee mustn't buzz,

Whoop—but he knows.

Kiss me, little one,

Nobody near !

Grasshopper, grasshopper,
Whoop—you can hear.

Kiss in the bower,

Tit on the tree !

Bird mustn't tell,

Whoop—he can see.

Enter MARGERY

I ha' been but a week here and I ha'
seen what I ha' seen, for to be sure it's
no more than a week since our old
Father Philip that has confessed our
mother for twenty years, and she was
hard put to it, and to speak truth, nigh
at the end of our last crust, and that
mouldy, and she cried out on him to put
me forth in the world and to make me a
woman of the world, and to win my own
bread, whereupon he asked our mother
if I could keep a quiet tongue i' my head,
and not speak till I was spoke to, and I
answered for myself that I never spoke
more than was needed, and he told me
he would advance me to the service of a
great lady, and took me ever so far away,
and gave me a great pat o' the cheek for
a pretty wench, and said it was a pity to
blindfold such eyes as mine, and such to
be sure they be, but he blinded 'em for
all that, and so brought me no-hows as
I may say, and the more shame to him
after his promise, into a garden and not
into the world, and bad me whatever I
saw not to speak one word, an' it 'ud be
well for me in the end, for there were
great ones who would look after me, and
to be sure I ha' seen great ones to-day—
and then not to speak one word, for
that's the rule o' the garden, tho' to be
sure if I had been Eve i' the garden I
shouldn't ha' minded the apple, for what's
an apple, you know, save to a child, and
I'm no child, but more a woman o' the
world than my lady here, and I ha' seen
what I ha' seen—tho' to be sure if I
hadn't minded it we should all on us
ha' had to go, bless the Saints, wi' bare
backs, but the backs 'ud ha' counte-
nanced one another, and belike it 'ud ha'
been always summer, and anyhow I am

as well-shaped as my lady here, and I ha' seen what I ha' seen, and what's the good of my talking to myself, for here comes my lady (*enter Rosamund*), and, my lady, tho' I shouldn't speak one word, I wish you joy o' the King's brother.

Rosamund. What is it you mean?

Margery. I mean your goodman, your husband, my lady, for I saw your ladyship a-parting wi' him even now i' the coppice, when I was a-getting o' bluebells for your ladyship's nose to smell on—and I ha' seen the King once at Oxford, and he's as like the King as fingernail to fingernail, and I thought at first it was the King, only you know the King's married, for King Louis——

Rosamund. Married!

Margery. Years and years, my lady, for her husband, King Louis——

Rosamund. Hush!

Margery. —And I thought if it were the King's brother he had a better bride than the King, for the people do say that his is bad beyond all reckoning, and——

Rosamund. The people lie.

Margery. Very like, my lady, but most on 'em know an honest woman and a lady when they see her, and besides they say, she makes songs, and that's against her, for I never knew an honest woman that could make songs, tho' to be sure our mother 'ill sing me old songs by the hour, but then, God help her, she had 'em from her mother, and her mother from her mother back and back for ever so long, but none on 'em ever made songs, and they were all honest.

Rosamund. Go, you shall tell me of her some other time.

Margery. There's none so much to tell on her, my lady, only she kept the seventh commandment better than some I know on, or I couldn't look your ladyship i' the face, and she brew'd the best ale in all Glo'ster, that is to say in her time when she had the 'Crown.'

Rosamund. The crown! who?

Margery. Mother.

Rosamund. I mean her whom you call—fancy—my husband's brother's wife.

Margery. Oh, Queen Eleanor. Yes, my lady; and tho' I be sworn not to speak a word, I can tell you all about her, if——

Rosamund. No word now. I am faint and sleepy. Leave me. Nay—go. What! will you anger me?

[*Exit Margery.*]

He charged me not to question any of those

About me. Have I? no! she question'd me.

Did she not slander *him*? Should she stay here?

May she not tempt me, being at my side,

To question *her*? Nay, can I send her hence

Without his kingly leave? I am in the dark.

I have lived, poor bird, from cage to cage, and known

Nothing but him—happy to know no more,

So that he loved me—and he loves me—yes,

And bound me by his love to secrecy Till his own time.

Eleanor, Eleanor, have I Not heard ill things of her in France?

Oh, she's

The Queen of France. I see it—some confusion,

Some strange mistake. I did not hear aright,

Myself confused with parting from the King.

Margery (behind scene). Bee mustn't buzz,

Whoop—but he knows.

Rosamund. Yet her—what her? he hinted of some her—

When he was here before——

Something that would displease me. Hath he stray'd

From love's clear path into the common bush.

And, being scratch'd, returns to his true
rose,

Who hath not thorn enough to prick him
for it,

Ev'n with a word?

Margery (behind scene). Bird mustn't
tell,

Whoop—he can see.

Rosamund. I would not hear him.

Nay—there's more—he frown'd

'No mate for her, if it should come to
that'—

To that—to what?

Margery (behind scene). Whoop—but
he knows,

Whoop—but he knows.

Rosamund. O God! some dreadful
truth is breaking on me—

Some dreadful thing is coming on me.

[*Enter Geoffrey.*

Geoffrey!

Geoffrey. What are you crying for,
when the sun shines?

Rosamund. Hath not thy father left
us to ourselves?

Geoffrey. Ay, but he's taken the rain
with him. I hear Margery: I'll go play
with her.

[*Exit Geoffrey.*

Rosamund. Rainbow, stay,

Gleam upon gloom,

Bright as my dream,

Rainbow, stay!

But it passes away,

Gloom upon gleam,

Dark as my doom—

O rainbow stay.

SCENE II.—OUTSIDE THE WOODS NEAR ROSAMUND'S BOWER

ELEANOR. FITZURSE

Eleanor. Up from the salt lips of the
land we two

Have track'd the King to this dark inland
wood;

And somewhere hereabouts he vanish'd.
Here

His turtle builds; his exit is our adit:

Watch! he will out again, and presently,
Seeing he must to Westminster and crown
Young Henry there to-morrow.

Fitzurse.

We have watch'd

So long in vain, he hath pass'd out again,
And on the other side.

[*A great horn winded.*

Hark! Madam!

Eleanor.

Ay,

How ghostly sounds that horn in the
black wood!

[*A countryman flying.*

Whither away, man? what are you flying
from?

Countryman. The witch! the witch!
she sits naked by a great heap of gold in
the middle of the wood, and when the
horn sounds she comes out as a wolf.
Get you hence! a man passed in there
to-day: I holla'd to him, but he didn't
hear me: he'll never out again, the witch
has got him. I daren't stay—I daren't
stay!

Eleanor. Kind of the witch to give
thee warning tho'. [*Man flies.*
Is not this wood-witch of the rustic's fear
Our woodland Circe that hath witch'd
the King?

[*Horn sounded. Another flying.*

Fitzurse. Again! stay, fool, and tell
me why thou fliest.

Countryman. Fly thou too. The
King keeps his forest head of game here,
and when that horn sounds, a score of
wolf-dogs are let loose that will tear thee
piecemeal. Linger not till the third
horn. Fly!

[*Exit.*

Eleanor. This is the likelier tale.

We have hit the place.

Now let the King's fine game look to
itself.

[*Horn.*

Fitzurse. Again!—

And far on in the dark heart of the wood
I hear the yelping of the hounds of hell.

Eleanor. I have my dagger here to
still their throats.

Fitzurse. Nay, Madam, not to-night
—the night is falling.

What can be done to-night?

Eleanor.

Well—well—away.

SCENE III.—TRAITOR'S MEADOW AT FRÉTEVAL. PAVILIONS AND TENTS OF THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH BARONAGE.

BECKET and HERBERT OF BOSHAM

Becket. See here !

Herbert. What's here ?

Becket. A notice from the priest,
To whom our John of Salisbury com-
mitted

The secret of the bower, that our wolf-
Queen

Is prowling round the fold. I should be
back

In England ev'n for this.

Herbert. These are by-things
In the great cause.

Becket. The by-things of the Lord
Are the wrong'd innocences that will cry
From all the hidden by-ways of the
world

In the great day against the wronger. I
know

Thy meaning. Perish she, I, all, before
The Church should suffer wrong !

Herbert. Do you see, my lord,
There is the King talking with Walter
Map ?

Becket. He hath the Pope's last
letters, and they threaten

The immediate thunder-blast of interdict :
Yet he can scarce be touching upon those,
Or scarce would smile that fashion.

Herbert. Winter sunshine !
Beware of opening out thy bosom to it,
Lest thou, myself, and all thy flock
should catch

An after ague-fit of trembling. Look !
He bows, he bares his head, he is coming
hither.

Still with a smile.

Enter KING HENRY and WALTER MAP

Henry. We have had so many hours
together, Thomas,
So many happy hours alone together,
That I would speak with you once more
alone.

Becket. My liege, your will and
happiness are mine.

[*Exeunt King and Becket.*]

Herbert. The same smile still.

Walter Map. Do you see that great
black cloud that hath come over the sun
and cast us all into shadow ?

Herbert. And feel it too.

Walter Map. And see you yon side-
beam that is forced from under it, and
sets the church-tower over there all a-
hell-fire as it were ?

Herbert. Ay.

Walter Map. It is this black, bell-
silencing, anti-marrying, burial-hinder-
ing interdict that hath squeezed out this side-
smile upon Canterbury, whereof may
come conflagration. Were I Thomas, I
wouldn't trust it. Sudden change is a
house on sand ; and tho' I count Henry
honest enough, yet when fear creeps in
at the front, honesty steals out at the
back, and the King at last is fairly scared
by this cloud—this interdict. I have
been more for the King than the Church
in this matter—yea, even for the sake of
the Church : for, truly, as the case stood,
you had safelier have slain an archbishop
than a she-goat : but our recoverer and
upholder of customs hath in this crowning
of young Henry by York and London
so violated the immemorial usage of the
Church, that, like the gravedigger's child
I have heard of, trying to ring the bell,
he hath half-hanged himself in the rope
of the Church, or rather pulled all the
Church with the Holy Father astride of
it down upon his own head.

Herbert. Were you there ?

Walter Map. In the church rope ?—
no. I was at the crowning, for I have
pleasure in the pleasure of crowds, and
to read the faces of men at a great show.

Herbert. And how did Roger of York
comport himself ?

Walter Map. As magnificently and
archiepiscopally as our Thomas would
have done : only there was a dare-devil
in his eye—I should say a dare-Becket.
He thought less of two kings than of one

Roger the king of the occasion. Foliot is the holier man, perhaps the better. Once or twice there ran a twitch across his face as who should say what's to follow? but Salisbury was a calf cowed by Mother Church, and every now and then glancing about him like a thief at night when he hears a door open in the house and thinks 'the master.'

Herbert. And the father-king?

Walter Map. The father's eye was so tender it would have called a goose off the green, and once he strove to hide his face, like the Greek king when his daughter was sacrificed, but he thought better of it: it was but the sacrifice of a kingdom to his son, a smaller matter; but as to the young crownling himself, he looked so malapert in the eyes, that had I fathered him I had given him more of the rod than the sceptre. Then followed the thunder of the captains and the shouting, and so we came on to the banquet, from whence there puffed out such an incense of unctuousity into the nostrils of our Gods of Church and State, that Lucullus or Apicius might have sniffed it in their Hades of heathenism, so that the smell of their own roast had not come across it——

Herbert. Map, tho' you make your butt too big, you overshoot it.

Walter Map. —For as to the fish, they de-miracled the miraculous draught, and might have sunk a navy——

Herbert. There again, Goliassing and Goliathising!

Walter Map. —And as for the flesh at table, a whole Peter's sheet, with all manner of game, and four-footed things, and fowls——

Herbert. And all manner of creeping things too?

Walter Map. —Well, there were Abbots—but they did not bring their women; and so we were dull enough at first, but in the end we flourished out into a merriment; for the old King would act servitor and hand a dish to his son; whereupon my Lord of York—

his fine-cut face bowing and beaming with all that courtesy which hath less loyalty in it than the backward scrape of the clown's heel—'great honour,' says he, 'from the King's self to the King's son.' Did you hear the young King's quip?

Herbert. No, what was it?

Walter Map. Glancing at the days when his father was only Earl of Anjou, he answered:—'Should not an earl's son wait on a king's son?' And when the cold corners of the King's mouth began to thaw, there was a great motion of laughter among us, part real, part childlike, to be freed from the dulness—part royal, for King and kingling both laughed, and so we could not but laugh, as by a royal necessity—part childlike again—when we felt we had laughed too long and could not stay ourselves—many midriff-shaken even to tears, as springs gush out after earthquakes—but from those, as I said before, there may come a conflagration—tho', to keep the figure moist and make it hold water, I should say rather, the lacrymation of a lamentation; but look if Thomas have not flung himself at the King's feet. They have made it up again—for the moment.

Herbert. Thanks to the blessed Magdalen, whose day it is.

Re-enter HENRY and BECKET. (*During their conference the BARONS and BISHOPS of FRANCE and ENGLAND come in at back of stage.*)

Becket. Ay, King! for in thy kingdom, as thou knowest,
The spouse of the Great King, thy King,
hath fallen—
The daughter of Zion lies beside the way—

The priests of Baal tread her underfoot—
The golden ornaments are stolen from her——

Henry. Have I not promised to restore her, Thomas,
And send thee back again to Canterbury?

Becket. Send back again those exiles
of my kin
Who wander famine-wasted thro' the
world.

Henry. Have I not promised, man,
to send them back?

Becket. Yet one thing more. Thou
hast broken thro' the pales
Of privilege, crowning thy young son by
York,
London and Salisbury—not Canterbury.

Henry. York crown'd the Conqueror
—not Canterbury.

Becket. There was no Canterbury in
William's time.

Henry. But Hereford, you know,
crown'd the first Henry.

Becket. But Anselm crown'd this
Henry o'er again.

Henry. And thou shalt crown my
Henry o'er again.

Becket. And is it then with thy good-
will that I

Proceed against thine evil councillors,
And hurl the dread ban of the Church
on those

Who made the second mitre play the first,
And acted me?

Henry. Well, well, then—have thy
way!

It may be they were evil councillors.
What more, my lord Archbishop? What
more, Thomas?

I make thee full amends. Say all thy
say,

But blaze not out before the Frenchmen
here.

Becket. More? Nothing, so thy
promise be thy deed.

Henry (holding out his hand). Give
me thy hand. My Lords of
France and England,

My friend of Canterbury and myself
Are now once more at perfect amity.
Unkindly should I be, and most un-
knightly,

Not striving still, however much in vain,
To rival him in Christian charity.

Herbert. All praise to Heaven, and
sweet St. Magdalen!

Henry. And so farewell until we
meet in England.

Becket. I fear, my liege, we may not
meet in England.

Henry. How, do you make me a
traitor?

Becket. No, indeed!
That be far from thee.

Henry. Come, stay with us, then,
Before you part for England.

Becket. I am bound
For that one hour to stay with good
King Louis,
Who helpt me when none else.

Herbert. He said thy life
Was not one hour's worth in England
save

King Henry gave thee first the kiss of
peace.

Henry. He said so? Louis, did he?
look you, Herbert,
When I was in mine anger with King
Louis,

I swear I would not give the kiss of peace,
Not on French ground, nor any ground
but English,

Where his cathedral stands. Mine old
friend, Thomas,

I would there were that perfect trust
between us,

That health of heart, once ours, ere
Pope or King

Had come between us! Even now—
who knows?—

I might deliver all things to thy hand—
If . . . but I say no more . . . fare-
well, my lord.

Becket. Farewell, my liege!

[Exit Henry, then the Barons and
Bishops.]

Walter Map. There again! when the
full fruit of the royal promise might
have dropt into thy mouth hadst thou but
opened it to thank him.

Becket. He fenced his royal promise
with an *if*.

Walter Map. And is the King's *if*
too high a stile for your lordship to over-
step and come at all things in the next
field?

Becket. Ay, if this *if* be like the Devil's '*if*'
Thou wilt fall down and worship me.'

Herbert. Oh, Thomas,
I could fall down and worship thee, my Thomas,
For thou hast trodden this wine-press alone.

Becket. Nay, of the people there are many with me.

Walter Map. I am not altogether with you, my lord, tho' I am none of those that would raise a storm between you, lest ye should draw together like two ships in a calm. You wrong the King: he meant what he said to-day. Who shall vouch for his to-morrows? One word further. Doth not the *fewness* of anything make the fulness of it in estimation? Is not virtue prized mainly for its rarity and great baseness loathed as an exception: for were all, my lord, as noble as yourself, who would look up to you? and were all as base as—who shall I say—Fitzurse and his following—who would look down upon them? My lord, you have put so many of the King's household out of communion, that they begin to smile at it.

Becket. At their peril, at their peril——

Walter Map. —For tho' the drop may hollow out the dead stone, doth not the living skin thicken against perpetual whippings? This is the second grain of good counsel I ever proffered thee, and so cannot suffer by the rule of frequency. Have I sown it in salt? I trust not, for before God I promise you the King hath many more wolves than he can tame in his woods of England, and if it suit their purpose to howl for the King, and you still move against him, you may have no less than to die for it; but God and his free wind grant your lordship a happy home-return and the King's kiss of peace in Kent. Farewell! I must follow the King. [Exit.]

Herbert. Ay, and I warrant the customs. Did the King
Speak of the customs?

Becket. No!—To die for it—
I live to die for it, I die to live for it.
The State will die, the Church can never die.

The King's not like to die for that which dies;

But I must die for that which never dies.
It will be so—my visions in the Lord:
It must be so, my friend! the wolves of England

Must murder her one shepherd, that the sheep

May feed in peace. False figure, Map would say.

Earth's falses are heaven's truths. And when my voice

Is martyr'd mute, and this man disappears,
That perfect trust may come again between us,

And there, there, there, not here I shall rejoice

To find my stray sheep back within the fold.

The crowd are scattering, let us move away!

And thence to England. [Exeunt.]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE BOWER

Geoffrey (coming out of the wood).
Light again! light again! Margery? no, that's a finer thing there. How it glitters!

Eleanor (entering). Come to me, little one. How camest thou hither?

Geoffrey. On my legs.

Eleanor. And mighty pretty legs too. Thou art the prettiest child I ever saw. Wilt thou love me?

Geoffrey. No; I only love mother.

Eleanor. Ay; and who is thy mother?

Geoffrey. They call her—— But she lives secret, you see.

Eleanor. Why?

Geoffrey. Don't know why.

Eleanor. Ay, but some one comes to see her now and then. Who is he?

Geoffrey. Can't tell.

Eleanor. What does she call him?

Geoffrey. My liege.

Eleanor. Pretty one, how camest thou?

Geoffrey. There was a bit of yellow silk here and there, and it looked pretty like a glowworm, and I thought if I followed it I should find the fairies.

Eleanor. I am the fairy, pretty one, a good fairy to thy mother. Take me to her.

Geoffrey. There are good fairies and bad fairies, and sometimes she cries, and can't sleep sound o' nights because of the bad fairies.

Eleanor. She shall cry no more; she shall sleep sound enough if thou wilt take me to her. I am her good fairy.

Geoffrey. But you don't look like a good fairy. Mother does. You are not pretty, like mother.

Eleanor. We can't all of us be as pretty as thou art—(aside) little bastard. Come, here is a golden chain I will give thee if thou wilt lead me to thy mother.

Geoffrey. No—no gold. Mother says gold spoils all. Love is the only gold.

Eleanor. I love thy mother, my pretty boy. Show me where thou camest out of the wood.

Geoffrey. By this tree; but I don't know if I can find the way back again.

Eleanor. Where's the warder?

Geoffrey. Very bad. Somebody struck him.

Eleanor. Ay? who was that?

Geoffrey. Can't tell. But I heard say he had had a stroke, or you'd have heard his horn before now. Come along, then? we shall see the silk here and there, and I want my supper. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.—ROSAMUND'S BOWER

Rosamund. The boy so late; pray God, he be not lost.

I sent this Margery, and she comes not back;

I sent another, and she comes not back.

I go myself—so many alleys, crossings,

Paths, avenues—nay, if I lost him, now The folds have fallen from the mystery, And left all naked, I were lost indeed.

Enter GEOFFREY and ELEANOR

Geoffrey, the pain thou hast put me to!

[Seeing Eleanor.

Ha, you!

How came you hither?

Eleanor. Your own child brought me hither!

Geoffrey. You said you couldn't trust Margery, and I watched her and followed her into the woods, and I lost her and went on and on till I found the light and the lady, and she says she can make you sleep o' nights.

Rosamund. How dared you? Know you not this bower is secret, Of and belonging to the King of England, More sacred than his forests for the chase?

Nay, nay, Heaven help you; get you hence in haste

Lest worse befall you.

Eleanor. Child, I am mine own self Of and belonging to the King. The King

Hath divers ofs and ons, ofs and belongings,

Almost as many as your true Mussulman—Belongings, paramours, whom it pleases him

To call his wives; but so it chances, child,

That I am his main paramour, his sultana. But since the fondest pair of doves will jar,

Ev'n in a cage of gold, we had words of late,

And thereupon he call'd my children bastards.

Do you believe that you are married to him?

Rosamund. I should believe it.

Eleanor. You must not believe it. Because I have a wholesome medicine here

Puts that belief asleep. Your answer, beauty!

Do you believe that you are married to him?

Rosamund. Geoffrey, my boy, I saw the ball you lost in the fork of the great willow over the brook. Go. See that you do not fall in. Go.

Geoffrey. And leave you alone with the good fairy. She calls you beauty, but I don't like her looks. Well, you bid me go, and I'll have my ball anyhow. Shall I find you asleep when I come back?

Rosamund. Go. [*Exit Geoffrey.*]

Eleanor. He is easily found again.

Do you believe it?

I pray you then to take my sleeping-draught;

But if you should not care to take it—see! [*Draws a dagger.*]

What! have I scared the red rose from your face

Into your heart? But this will find it there,

And dig it from the root for ever.

Rosamund. Help! help!

Eleanor. They say that walls have ears; but these, it seems,

Have none! and I have none—to pity thee.

Rosamund. I do beseech you—my child is so young,

So backward too; I cannot leave him yet.

I am not so happy I could not die myself,

But the child is so young. You have children—his;

And mine is the King's child; so, if you love him—

Nay, if you love him, there is great wrong done

Somehow; but if you do not—there are those

Who say you do not love him—let me go With my young boy, and I will hide my face,

Blacken and gipsyfy it; none shall know me;

The King shall never hear of me again, But I will beg my bread along the world

With my young boy, and God will be our guide.

I never meant you harm in any way.

See, I can say no more.

Eleanor. Will you not say you are not married to him?

Rosamund. Ay, Madam, I can say it, if you will.

Eleanor. Then is thy pretty boy a bastard?

Rosamund. No.

Eleanor. And thou thyself a proven wanton?

Rosamund. No.

I am none such. I never loved but one.

I have heard of such that range from love to love,

Like the wild beast—if you can call it love.

I have heard of such—yea, even among those

Who sit on thrones—I never saw any such,

Never knew any such, and howsoever

You do misname me, match'd with any such,

I am snow to mud.

Eleanor. The more the pity then That thy true home—the heavens—cry

out for thee

Who art too pure for earth.

Enter FITZURSE

Fitzurse. Give her to me.

Eleanor. The Judas-lover of our passion-play

Hath track'd us hither.

Fitzurse. Well, why not? I follow'd You and the child: he babbled all the

way,

Give her to me to make my honey-moon.

Eleanor. Ay, as the bears love honey.

Could you keep her

Indungeon'd from one whisper of the wind,

Dark even from a side glance of the moon,

And oublietted in the centre—No!

I follow out my hate and thy revenge.

Fitzurse. You bad me take revenge
another way—
To bring her to the dust. . . . Come
with me, love,
And I will love thee. . . . Madam, let
her live,
I have a far-off burrow where the King
Would miss her and for ever.

Eleanor. How sayst thou,
sweetheart?
Wilt thou go with him? he will marry
thee.

Rosamund. Give me the poison; set
me free of him!

[*Eleanor offers the vial.*]

No, no! I will not have it.

Eleanor. Then this other,
The wiser choice, because my sleeping-
draught
May bloat thy beauty out of shape, and
make

Thy body loathsome even to thy child;
While this but leaves thee with a broken
heart,

A doll-face blanch'd and bloodless, over
which

If pretty Geoffrey do not break his own,
It must be broken for him.

Rosamund. O I see now
Your purpose is to fright me—a troura-
dour

You play with words. You had never
used so many,

Not if you meant it, I am sure. The
child . . .

No . . . mercy! No! (*Kneels.*)

Eleanor. Play! . . . that
bosom never

Heaved under the King's hand with such
true passion

As at this loveless knife that stirs the riot,
Which it will quench in blood! Slave,
if he love thee,

Thy life is worth the wrestle for it: arise,
And dash thyself against me that I may
slay thee!

The worm! shall I let her go? But
ha! what's here?

By very God, the cross I gave the King!
His village darling in some lewd caress

Has wheedled it off the King's neck to
her own.

By thy leave, beauty. Ay, the same!
I warrant

Thou hast sworn on this my cross a
hundred times

Never to leave him—and that merits
death,

False oath on holy cross—for thou must
leave him

To-day, but not quite yet. My good
Fitzurse,

The running down the chase is kindlier
sport

Ev'n than the death. Who knows but
that thy lover

May plead so pitifully, that I may spare
thee?

Come hither, man; stand there. (*To
Rosamund*) Take thy one chance;

Catch at the last straw. Kneel to thy
lord Fitzurse;

Crouch even because thou hatest him;
fawn upon him

For thy life and thy son's.

Rosamund (rising). I am a Clifford,
My son a Clifford and Plantagenet.

I am to die then, tho' there stand beside
thee

One who might grapple with thy dagger,
if he

Had aught of man, or thou of woman;
or I

Would bow to such a baseness as would
make me

Most worthy of it; both of us will die,
And I will fly with my sweet boy to

heaven,
And shriek to all the saints among the
stars:

'Eleanor of Aquitaine, Eleanor of Eng-
land!

Murder'd by that adulteress Eleanor,
Whose doings are a horror to the east,

A hissing in the west!' Have we not
heard

Raymond of Poitou, thine own uncle—
nay,

Geoffrey Plantagenet, thine own husband's
father—

Nay, ev'n the accursed heathen Salad-
deen——

Strike !

I challenge thee to meet me before God.
Answer me there.

Eleanor (raising the dagger). This in
thy bosom, fool,
And after in thy bastard's !

*Enter BECKET from behind. Catches
hold of her arm.*

Becket. Murderess !

[*The dagger falls ; they stare at one
another. After a pause.*]

Eleanor. My lord, we know you
proud of your fine hand,
But having now admired it long enough,
We find that it is mightier than it seems—
At least mine own is frailer ; you are
laming it.

Becket. And lamed and main'd to
dislocation, better
Than raised to take a life which Henry
bad me
Guard from the stroke that dooms thee
after death
To wail in deathless flame.

Eleanor. Nor you, nor I
Have now to learn, my lord, that our
good Henry
Says many a thing in sudden heats,
which he

Gainsays by next sunrising—often ready
To tear himself for having said as much.
My lord, Fitzurse——

Becket. He too ! what dost thou here ?
Dares the bear slouch into the lion's den ?
One downward plunge of his paw would
rend away

Eyesight and manhood, life itself, from
thee.

Go, lest I blast thee with anathema,
And make thee a world's horror.

Fitzurse. My lord, I shall
Remember this.

Becket. I do remember thee ;
Lest I remember thee to the lion, go.

[*Exit Fitzurse.*]
Take up your dagger ; put it in the
sheath.

Eleanor. Might not your courtesy
stoop to hand it me ?

But crowns must bow when mitres sit so
high.

Well—well—too costly to be left or lost.
[*Picks up the dagger.*]

I had it from an Arab soldan, who,
When I was there in Antioch, marvell'd
at

Our unfamiliar beauties of the west ;
But wonder'd more at my much constancy
To the monk-king, Louis, our former
burthen,

From whom, as being too kin, you know,
my lord,

God's grace and Holy Church deliver'd
us.

I think, time given, I could have talk'd
him out of

His ten wives into one. Look at the
hilt.

What excellent workmanship. In our
poor west

We cannot do it so well.

Becket. We can do worse.
Madam, I saw your dagger at her throat ;
I heard your savage cry.

Eleanor. Well acted, was it ?
A comedy meant to seem a tragedy—
A feint, a farce. My honest lord, you
are known

Thro' all the courts of Christendom as
one

That mars a cause with over-violence.

You have wrong'd Fitzurse. I speak not
of myself.

We thought to scare this minion of the
King

Back from her churchless commerce with
the King

To the fond arms of her first love,
Fitzurse,

Who swore to marry her. You have
spoil'd the farce.

My savage cry ? Why, she—she—when
I strove

To work against her license for her
good,

Bark'd out at me such monstrous charges,
that

The King himself, for love of his own
sons,

If hearing, would have spurn'd her ;
whereupon

I menaced her with this, as when we
threaten

A yelper with a stick. Nay, I deny not
That I was somewhat anger'd. Do you
hear me ?

Believe or no, I care not. You have
lost

The ear of the King. I have it. . . .

My lord Paramount,

Our great High-priest, will not your
Holiness

Vouchsafe a gracious answer to your
Queen ?

Becket. Rosamund hath not answer'd
you one word ;

Madam, I will not answer you one word.
Daughter, the world hath trick'd thee.

Leave it, daughter ;

Come thou with me to Godstow nunnery,
And live what may be left thee of a life
Saved as by miracle alone with Him
Who gave it.

Re-enter GEOFFREY

Geoffrey. Mother, you told me a great
fib : it wasn't in the willow.

Becket. Follow us, my son, and we
will find it for thee—

Or something manlier.

[*Exeunt* Becket, Rosamund, and
Geoffrey.

Eleanor. The world hath trick'd her
—that's the King ; if so,

There was the farce, the feint—not mine.
And yet

I am all but sure my dagger was a feint
Till the worm turn'd—not life shot up in
blood,

But death drawn in ;—(*looking at the vial*)
this was no feint then ? no.

But can I swear to that, had she but
given

Plain answer to plain query ? nay, me-
thinks

Had she but bow'd herself to meet the
wave

Of humiliation, worshipt whom she
loathed,

I should have let her be, scorn'd her too
much

To harm her. Henry—Becket tells him
this—

To take my life might lose him Aquitaine.
Too politic for that. Imprison me ?

No, for it came to nothing—only a feint.
Did she not tell me I was playing on
her ?

I'll swear to mine own self it was a
feint.

Why should I swear, Eleanor, who am,
or was,

A sovereign power ? The King plucks
out their eyes

Who anger him, and shall not I, the
Queen,

Tear out her heart—kill, kill with knife
or venom

One of his slanderous harlots ? 'None
of such ?'

I love her none the more. Tut, the
chance gone,

She lives—but not for him ; one point is
gain'd.

O I, that thro' the Pope divorced King
Louis,

Scorning his monkery,—I that wedded
Henry,

Honouring his manhood—will he not
mock at me

The jealous fool balk'd of her will—with
him ?

But he and he must never meet again.
Reginald Fitzurse !

Re-enter FITZURSE

Fitzurse. Here, Madam, at your
pleasure.

Eleanor. My pleasure is to have a
man about me.

Why did you slink away so like a cur ?

Fitzurse. Madam, I am as much man
as the King.

Madam, I fear Church-censures like your
King.

Eleanor. He grovels to the Church
when he's black-blooded,

But kinglike fought the proud archbishop,
 —kinglike
 Defied the Pope, and, like his kingly
 sires,
 The Normans, striving still to break or
 bind
 The spiritual giant with our island laws
 And customs, made me for the moment
 proud
 Ev'n of that stale Church-bond which
 link'd me with him
 To bear him kingly sons. I am not so
 sure
 But that I love him still. Thou as much
 man !
 No more of that ; we will to France and
 be
 Beforehand with the King, and brew from
 out
 This Godstow-Becket intermeddling such
 A strong hate-philtre as may madden him
 —madden
 Against his priest beyond all hellebore.

ACT V

SCENE I.—CASTLE IN NORMANDY.
 KING'S CHAMBER

HENRY, ROGER OF YORK, FOLIOT,
 JOCELYN OF SALISBURY

Roger of York. Nay, nay, my liege,
 He rides abroad with armed followers,
 Hath broken all his promises to thyself,
 Cursed and anathematised us right and
 left,
 Stirr'd up a party there against your
 son—

Henry. Roger of York, you always
 hated him,
 Even when you both were boys at
 Theobald's.

Roger of York. I always hated bound-
 less arrogance.
 In mine own cause I strove against him
 there,
 And in thy cause I strive against him
 now.

T

Henry. I cannot think he moves
 against my son,
 Knowing right well with what a tender-
 ness

He loved my son.

Roger of York. Before you made him
 king.

But Becket ever moves against a king.
 The Church is all—the crime to be a
 king.

We trust your Royal Grace, lord of more
 land

Than any crown in Europe, will not yield
 To lay your neck beneath your citizen's
 heel.

Henry. Not to a Gregory of my
 throning ! No.

Foliot. My royal liege, in aiming at
 your love,

It may be sometimes I have overshot
 My duties to our Holy Mother Church,
 Tho' all the world allows I fall no inch
 Behind this Becket, rather go beyond
 In scourgings, macerations, mortifyings,
 Fasts, disciplines that clear the spiritual
 eye,

And break the soul from earth. Let all
 that be.

I boast not : but you know thro' all this
 quarrel

I still have cleaved to the crown, in hope
 the crown

Would cleave to me that but obey'd the
 crown,

Crowning your son ; for which our loyal
 service,

And since we likewise swore to obey the
 customs,

York and myself, and our good Salisbury
 here,

Are push'd from out communion of the
 Church.

Jocelyn of Salisbury. Becket hath
 trodden on us like worms, my
 liege ;

Trodden one half dead ; one half, but
 half-alive,

Cries to the King.

Henry (aside). Take care o' thyself,
 O King.

Jocelyn of Salisbury. Being so crush'd
and so humiliated
We scarcely dare to bless the food we
eat
Because of Becket.

Henry. What would ye have me do?

Roger of York. Summon your barons ;
take their counsel : yet
I know—could swear—as long as Becket
breathes,
Your Grace will never have one quiet
hour.

Henry. What? . . . Ay . . . but
pray you do not work upon me.
I see your drift . . . it may be so . . .
and yet
You know me easily anger'd. Will you
hence?
He shall absolve you . . . you shall
have redress.

I have a dizzying headache. Let me
rest.

I'll call you by and by.

[*Exeunt Roger of York, Foliot, and
Jocelyn of Salisbury.*]

Would he were dead! I have lost all
love for him.

If God would take him in some sudden
way—

Would he were dead. [*Lies down.*]

Page (entering). My liege, the Queen
of England.

Henry. God's eyes! [*Starting up.*]

Enter ELEANOR

Eleanor. Of England? Say of
Aquitaine.

I am no Queen of England. I had
dream'd

I was the bride of England, and a queen.

Henry. And,—while you dream'd
you were the bride of England,—
Stirring her baby-king against me? ha!

Eleanor. The brideless Becket is thy
king and mine:

I will go live and die in Aquitaine.

Henry. Except I clap thee into
prison here,

Lest thou shouldst play the wanton there
again.

Ha, you of Aquitaine! O you of Aquitaine!

You were but Aquitaine to Louis—no
wife;

You are only Aquitaine to me—no wife.

Eleanor. And why, my lord, should
I be wife to one

That only wedded me for Aquitaine?

Yet this no wife—her six and thirty sail
Of Provence blew you to your English
throne;

And this no wife has born you four brave
sons,

And one of them at least is like to prove
Bigger in our small world than thou art.

Henry. Ay—
Richard, if he *be* mine—I hope him
mine.

But thou art like enough to make him
thine.

Eleanor. Becket is like enough to
make all his.

Henry. Methought I had recover'd
of the Becket,
That all was planed and bevell'd smooth
again,

Save from some hateful cantrip of thine
own.

Eleanor. I will go live and die in
Aquitaine.

I dream'd I was the consort of a king,
Not one whose back his priest has
broken.

Henry. What!
Is the end come? You, will you crown
my foe

My victor in mid-battle? I will be
Sole master of my house. The end is
mine.

What game, what juggle, what devilry
are you playing?

Why do you thrust this Becket on me
again?

Eleanor. Why? for I *am* true wife,
and have my fears

Lest Becket thrust you even from your
throne.

Do you know this cross, my liege?

Henry (turning his head). Away!
Not I.

Eleanor. Not ev'n the central diamond, worth, I think,
Half of the Antioch whence I had it.

Henry. That?

Eleanor. I gave it you, and you your paramour;
She sends it back, as being dead to earth,
So dead henceforth to you.

Henry. Dead! you have murder'd her,
Found out her secret bower and murder'd her.

Eleanor. Your Becket knew the secret of your bower.

Henry (calling out). Ho there! thy rest of life is hopeless prison.

Eleanor. And what would my own Aquitaine say to that?
First, free thy captive from *her* hopeless prison.

Henry. O devil, can I free her from the grave?

Eleanor. You are too tragic: both of us are players
In such a comedy as our court of Provence
Had laugh'd at. That's a delicate Latin lay
Of Walter Map: the lady holds the cleric
Lovelier than any soldier, his poor tonsure
A crown of Empire. Will you have it again?

(*Offering the cross. He dashes it down.*)
St. Cupid, that is too irreverent.
Then mine once more. (*Puts it on.*)

Your cleric hath your lady.

Nay, what uncomely faces, could he see you!

Foam at the mouth because King Thomas, lord

Not only of your vassals but amours,
Thro' chastest honour of the Decalogue
Hath used the full authority of his Church
To put her into Godstow nunnery.

Henry. To put her into Godstow nunnery!

He dared not—liar! yet, yet I remember—

I do remember.

He bad me put her into a nunnery—
Into Godstow, into Hellstow, Devilstow!
The Church! the Church!

God's eyes! I would the Church were down in hell! [*Exit.*]

Eleanor. Aha!

Enter the four KNIGHTS

Fitzurse. What made the King cry out so furiously?

Eleanor. Our Becket, who will not absolve the Bishops.

I think ye four have cause to love this Becket.

Fitzurse. I hate him for his insolence to all.

De Tracy. And I for all his insolence to thee.

De Brito. I hate him for I hate him is my reason,
And yet I hate him for a hypocrite.

De Morville. I do not love him, for he did his best
To break the barons, and now braves the King.

Eleanor. Strike, then, at once, the King would have him—See!

Re-enter HENRY

Henry. No man to love me, honour me, obey me!

Sluggards and fools!

The slave that eat my bread has kick'd his King!

The dog I cramm'd with dainties worried me!

The fellow that on a lame jade came to court,

A ragged cloak for saddle—he, he, he,
To shake my throne, to push into my chamber—

My bed, where ev'n the slave is private—he—

I'll have her out again, he shall absolve
The bishops—they but did my will—not you—

Sluggards and fools, why do you stand and stare?

You are no King's men—you—you—you
are Becket's men.

Down with King Henry! up with the
Archbishop!

Will no man free me from this pestilent
priest? *[Exit.]*

[The Knights draw their swords.]

Eleanor. Are ye king's men? I am
king's woman, I.

The Knights. King's men! King's
men!

SCENE II.—A ROOM IN CANTER-
BURY MONASTERY

BECKET and JOHN OF SALISBURY

Becket. York said so?

John of Salisbury. Yes: a man may
take good counsel

Ev'n from his foe.

Becket. York will say anything.
What is he saying now? gone to the
King

And taken our anathema with him.
York!

Can the King de-anathematise this York?

John of Salisbury. Thomas, I would
thou hadst return'd to England,

Like some wise prince of this world from
his wars,

With more of olive-branch and amnesty
For foes at home—thou hast raised the
world against thee.

Becket. Why, John, my kingdom is
not of this world.

John of Salisbury. If it were more of
this world it might be

More of the next. A policy of wise
pardon

Wins here as well as there. To bless
thine enemies——

Becket. Ay, mine, not Heaven's.

John of Salisbury. And may there
not be something

Of this world's leaven in thee too, when
crying

On Holy Church to thunder out her
rights

And thine own wrong so pitilessly? Ah,
Thomas,

The lightnings that we think are only
Heaven's

Flash sometimes out of earth against the
heavens.

The soldier, when he lets his whole self go
Lost in the common good, the common
wrong,

Strikes truest ev'n for his own self. I
crave

Thy pardon—I have still thy leave to
speak.

Thou hast waged God's war against the
King; and yet

We are self-uncertain creatures, and we
may,

Yea, even when we know not, mix our
spites

And private hates with our defence of
Heaven.

Enter EDWARD GRIM

Becket. Thou art but yesterday from
Cambridge, Grim;

What say ye there of Becket?

Grim. I believe him

The bravest in our roll of Primates down
From Austin—there are some—for there
are men

Of canker'd judgment everywhere——

Becket. Who hold

With York, with York against me.

Grim. Well, my lord,

A stranger monk desires access to you.

Becket. York against Canterbury,
York against God!

I am open to him. *[Exit Grim.]*

Enter ROSAMUND as a Monk

Rosamund. Can I speak with you
Alone, my father?

Becket. Come you to confess?

Rosamund. Not now.

Becket. Then speak; this
is my other self,

Who like my conscience never lets me be.

Rosamund (throwing back the cowl). I
know him; our good John of
Salisbury.

Becket. Breaking already from thy noviciate

To plunge into this bitter world again—
These wells of Marah. I am grieved,
my daughter.

I thought that I had made a peace for thee.

Rosamund. Small peace was mine in my noviciate, father.

Thro' all closed doors a dreadful whisper crept

That thou wouldst excommunicate the King.

I could not eat, sleep, pray: I had with me
The monk's disguise thou gavest me for my bower:

I think our Abbess knew it and allow'd it.
I fled, and found thy name a charm to get me

Food, roof, and rest. I met a robber once,

I told him I was bound to see the Archbishop;

'Pass on,' he said, and in thy name I pass'd

From house to house. In one a son stone-blind

Sat by his mother's hearth: he had gone too far

Into the King's own woods; and the poor mother,

Soon as she learnt I was a friend of thine,

Cried out against the cruelty of the King.

I said it was the King's courts, not the King;

But she would not believe me, and she wish'd

The Church were king: she had seen the Archbishop once,

So mild, so kind. The people love thee, father.

Becket. Alas! when I was Chancellor to the King,

I fear I was as cruel as the King.

Rosamund. Cruel? Oh, no—it is the law, not he;

The customs of the realm.

Becket. The customs! customs!

Rosamund. My lord, you have not excommunicated him?

Oh, if you have, absolve him!

Becket. Daughter, daughter,
Deal not with things you know not.

Rosamund. I know him.
Then you have done it, and I call you cruel.

John of Salisbury. No, daughter, you mistake our good Archbishop;
For once in France the King had been so harsh,

He thought to excommunicate him—
Thomas,

You could not—old affection master'd you,

You falter'd into tears.

Rosamund. God bless him for it.

Becket. Nay, make me not a woman,
John of Salisbury,

Nor make me traitor to my holy office.

Did not a man's voice ring along the aisle,

'The King is sick and almost unto death.'

How could I excommunicate him then?

Rosamund. And wilt thou excommunicate him now?

Becket. Daughter, my time is short,
I shall not do it.

And were it longer—well—I should not do it.

Rosamund. Thanks in this life, and in the life to come.

Becket. Get thee back to thy nunnery with all haste;

Let this be thy last trespass. But one question—

How fares thy pretty boy, the little Geoffrey?

No fever, cough, croup, sickness?

Rosamund. No, but saved
From all that by our solitude. The plagues

That smite the city spare the solitudes.

Becket. God save him from all sickness of the soul!

Thee too, thy solitude among thy nuns,
May that save thee! Doth he remember me?

Rosamund. I warrant him.

Becket. He is marvellously like thee.

Rosamund. Likier the King.

Becket. No, daughter.

Rosamund. Ay, but wait
Till his nose rises ; he will be very king.

Becket. Ev'n so : but think not of
the King : farewell !

Rosamund. My lord, the city is full
of armed men.

Becket. Ev'n so : farewell !

Rosamund. I will but pass to vespers,
And breathe one prayer for my liege-lord
the King,
His child and mine own soul, and so
return.

Becket. Pray for me too : much need
of prayer have I.

[*Rosamund kneels and goes.*]

Dan John, how much we lose, we celi-
bates,

Lacking the love of woman and of child.

John of Salisbury. More gain than
loss ; for of your wives you shall
Find one a slut whose fairest linen seems
Foul as her dust-cloth, if she used it—
one

So charged with tongue, that every thread
of thought

Is broken ere it joins—a shrew to boot,
Whose evil song far on into the night
Thrills to the topmost tile—no hope but
death ;

One slow, fat, white, a burthen of the
hearth ;

And one that being thwarted ever swoons
And weeps herself into the place of
power ;

And one an *uxor pauperis* *Ibyci*.

So rare the household homemaking
bee,

Man's help ! but we, we have the Blessed
Virgin

For worship, and our Mother Church
for bride ;

And all the souls we saved and father'd
here

Will greet us as our babes in Paradise.

What noise was that ? she told us of
arm'd men

Here in the city. Will you not with-
draw ?

Becket. I once was out with Henry
in the days

When Henry loved me, and we came
upon

A wild-fowl sitting on her nest, so still
I reach'd my hand and touched ; she did
not stir ;

The snow had frozen round her, and she
sat

Stone-dead upon a heap of ice-cold
eggs.

Look ! how this love, this mother, runs
thro' all

The world God made—even the beast—
the bird !

John of Salisbury. Ay, still a lover
of the beast and bird ?

But these arm'd men—will you not hide
yourself ?

Perchance the fierce De Brocs from Salt-
wood Castle,

To assail our Holy Mother lest she
brood

Too long o'er this hard egg, the world,
and send

Her whole heart's heat into it, till it
break

Into young angels. Pray you, hide
yourself.

Becket. There was a little fair-hair'd
Norman maid

Lived in my mother's house : if Rosa-
mund is

The world's rose, as her name imports
her—she

Was the world's lily.

John of Salisbury. Ay, and what of
her ?

Becket. She died of leprosy.

John of Salisbury. I know not why
You call these old things back again, my
lord.

Becket. The drowning man, they say,
remembers all
The chances of his life, just ere he dies.

John of Salisbury. Ay—but these
arm'd men—will you drown your-
self ?

He loses half the meed of martyrdom
Who will be martyr when he might
escape.

Becket. What day of the week?
Tuesday?

John of Salisbury. Tuesday, my lord.

Becket. On a Tuesday was I born,
and on a Tuesday
Baptized; and on a Tuesday did I fly
Forth from Northampton; on a Tuesday
pass'd

From England into bitter banishment;
On a Tuesday at Pontigny came to
me

The ghostly warning of my martyrdom;
On a Tuesday from mine exile I return'd,
And on a Tuesday——

[*Tracy enters, then Fitzurse, De Brito,
and De Morville. Monks follow-
ing.*

—on a Tuesday—— *Tracy!*

(*A long silence broken by Fitzurse saying,
contemptuously,*

God help thee!

John of Salisbury (aside). How the
good Archbishop reddens!

He never yet could brook the note of
scorn.

Fitzurse. My lord, we bring a message
from the King

Beyond the water; will you have it
alone,

Or with these listeners near you?

Becket. As you will.

Fitzurse. Nay, as you will.

Becket. Nay, as you will.

John of Salisbury. Why then
Better perhaps to speak with them apart.
Let us withdraw.

[*All go out except the four Knights
and Becket.*

Fitzurse. We are all alone with him.
Shall I not smite him with his own cross-
staff?

De Morville. No, look! the door is
open: let him be,

Fitzurse. The King condemns your
excommunicating——

Becket. This is no secret, but a public
matter.

In here again!

[*John of Salisbury and Monks return.*

Now, sirs, the King's commands!

Fitzurse. The King beyond the water,
thro' our voices,

Commands you to be dutiful and leal
To your young King on this side of the
water,

Not scorn him for the foibles of his youth.
What! you would make his coronation
void

By cursing those who crown'd him. Out
upon you!

Becket. Reginald, all men know I
loved the Prince.

His father gave him to my care, and I
Became his second father: he had his
faults,

For which I would have laid mine own
life down

To help him from them, since indeed I
loved him,

And love him next after my lord his father.
Rather than dim the splendour of his
crown

I fain would treble and quadruple it
With revenues, realms, and golden pro-
vinces

So that were done in equity.

Fitzurse. You have broken
Your bond of peace, your treaty with the
King——

Wakening such brawls and loud disturb-
ances

In England, that he calls you oversea
To answer for it in his Norman courts.

Becket. Prate not of bonds, for never,
oh, never again

Shall the waste voice of the bond-break-
ing sea

Divide me from the mother church of
England,

My Canterbury. Loud disturbances!

Oh, ay—the bells rang out even to
deafening,

Organ and pipe, and dulcimer, chants
and hymns

In all the churches, trumpets in the halls.
Sobs, laughter, cries: they spread their
raiment down

Before me—would have made my path-
way flowers

Save that it was mid-winter in the street,
But full mid-summer in those honest
hearts.

Fitzurse. The King commands you
to absolve the bishops

Whom you have excommunicated.

Becket. I?

Not I, the Pope. Ask *him* for absolution.

Fitzurse. But you advised the Pope.

Becket. And so I did.

They have but to submit.

The four Knights. The King com-
mands you.

We are all King's men.

Becket. King's men at least
should know

That their own King closed with me last
July

That I should pass the censures of the
Church

On those that crown'd young Henry in
this realm,

And trampled on the rights of Canter-
bury.

Fitzurse. What! dare you charge
the King with treachery?

He sanction thee to excommunicate

The prelates whom he chose to crown
his son!

Becket. I spake no word of treachery,
Reginald.

But for the truth of this I make appeal
To all the archbishops, bishops, prelates,
barons,

Monks, knights, five hundred, that were
there and heard.

Nay, you yourself were there: you heard
yourself.

Fitzurse. I was not there.

Becket. I saw you there.

Fitzurse. I was not.

Becket. You were. I never forget
anything.

Fitzurse. He makes the King a
traitor, me a liar.

How long shall we forbear him?

John of Salisbury (*drawing Becket
aside*). O my good lord,

Speak with them privately on this here-
after.

You see they have been revelling, and I
fear

Are braced and brazen'd up with
Christmas wines

For any murderous brawl.

Becket. And yet they prate
Of mine, my brawls, when those, that
name themselves

Of the King's part, have broken down
our barns,

Wasted our diocese, outraged our tenants,
Lifted our produce, driven our clerics
out—

Why they, your friends, those ruffians,
the De Brocs,

They stood on Dover beach to murder
me,

They slew my stags in mine own manor
here,

Mutilated, poor brute, my sumpter-mule,
Plunder'd the vessel full of Gascon wine,

The old King's present, carried off the
casks,

Kill'd half the crew, dungeon'd the other
half

In Pevensey Castle—

De Morville. Why not rather then,
If this be so, complain to your young
King,

Not punish of your own authority?

Becket. Mine enemies barr'd all access
to the boy.

They knew he loved me.

Hugh, Hugh, how proudly you exalt
your head!

Nay, when they seek to overturn our
rights,

I ask no leave of king, or mortal man,
To set them straight again. Alone I do
it.

Give to the King the things that are the
King's,

And those of God to God.

Fitzurse. Threats! threats!
ye hear him.

What! will he excommunicate all the
world?

[*The Knights come round Becket.*

De Tracy. He shall not.

De Brito. Well, as yet—

I should be grateful—

He hath not excommunicated *me*.

Becket. Because thou wast *born* excommunicate.

I never spied in thee one gleam of grace.

De Brito. Your Christian's Christian charity!

Becket. By St. Denis—

De Brito. Ay, by St. Denis, now will he flame out,

And lose his head as old St. Denis did.

Becket. Ye think to scare me from my loyalty

To God and to the Holy Father. No! Tho' all the swords in England flash'd above me

Ready to fall at Henry's word or yours— Tho' all the loud-lung'd trumpets upon earth

Blared from the heights of all the thrones of her kings,

Blowing the world against me, I would stand

Clothed with the full authority of Rome, Mail'd in the perfect panoply of faith, First of the foremost of their files, who die For God, to people heaven in the great day When God makes up his jewels. Once I fled—

Never again, and you—I marvel at you— Ye know what is between us. Ye have sworn

Yourselves my men when I was Chancellor—

My vassals—and yet threaten your Archbishop

In his own house.

Knights. Nothing can be between us That goes against our fealty to the King.

Fitzurse. And in his name we charge you that ye keep

This traitor from escaping.

Becket. Rest you easy, For I am easy to keep. I shall not fly. Here, here, here will you find me.

De Morville. Know you not You have spoken to the peril of your life?

Becket. As I shall speak again.

Fitzurse, De Tracy, and De Brito.

To arms!

[*They rush out, De Morville lingers.*

Becket. De Morville,

I had thought so well of you; and even now

You seem the least assassin of the four.

Oh, do not damn yourself for company!

Is it too late for me to save your soul?

I pray you for one moment stay and speak.

De Morville. Becket, it is too late!

[*Exit.*

Becket. Is it too late?

Too late on earth may be too soon in hell.

Knights (in the distance). Close the great gate—ho, there—upon the town.

Becket's Retainers. Shut the hall-doors. [*A pause.*

Becket. You hear them, brother John; Why do you stand so silent, brother John?

John of Salisbury. For I was musing on an ancient saw,

Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re, Is strength less strong when hand-in-hand with grace?

Gratior in pulchro corpore virtus. Thomas,

Why should you heat yourself for such as these?

Becket. Methought I answer'd moderately enough.

John of Salisbury. As one that blows the coal to cool the fire.

My lord, I marvel why you never lean On any man's advising but your own.

Becket. Is it so, Dan John? well, what should I have done?

John of Salisbury. You should have taken counsel with your friends Before these bandits brake into your presence.

They seek—you make—occasion for your death.

Becket. My counsel is already taken, John.

I am prepared to die.

John of Salisbury. We are sinners all, The best of all not all-prepared to die.

Becket. God's will be done !

John of Salisbury. Ay, well.

God's will be done !

Grim (re-entering). My lord, the knights are arming in the garden Beneath the sycamore.

Becket. Good ! let them arm.

Grim. And one of the De Brocs is with them, Robert, The apostate monk that was with Randalph here.

He knows the twists and turnings of the place.

Becket. No fear !

Grim. No fear, my lord.

[*Crashes on the hall-doors. The Monks flee.*]

Becket (rising). Our dovecote flown ! I cannot tell why monks should all be cowards.

John of Salisbury. Take refuge in your own cathedral, Thomas.

Becket. Do they not fight the Great Fiend day by day ?

Valour and holy life should go together.

Why should all monks be cowards ?

John of Salisbury. Are they so ?

I say, take refuge in your own cathedral.

Becket. Ay, but I told them I would wait them here.

Grim. May they not say you dared not show yourself

In your old place ? and vespers are beginning.

[*Bell rings for vespers till end of scene.*]

You should attend the office, give them heart.

They fear you slain : they dread they know not what.

Becket. Ay, monks, not men.

Grim. I am a monk, my lord.

Perhaps, my lord, you wrong us.

Some would stand by you to the death.

Becket. Your pardon.

John of Salisbury. He said, 'Attend the office.'

Becket. Attend the office ?

Why then—The Cross !—who bears my Cross before me ?

Methought they would have brain'd me with it, John. [*Grim takes it.*]

Grim. I ! Would that I could bear thy cross indeed !

Becket. The Mitre !

John of Salisbury. Will you wear it ?—there !

[*Becket puts on the mitre.*]

Becket. The Pall !

I go to meet my King !

[*Puts on the pall.*]

Grim. To meet the King ?

[*Crashes on the door as they go out.*]

John of Salisbury. Why do you move with such a stateliness ?

Can you not hear them yonder like a storm,

Battering the doors, and breaking thro' the walls ?

Becket. Why do the heathen rage ?

My two good friends,

What matters murder'd here, or murder'd there ?

And yet my dream foretold my martyrdom

In mine own church. It is God's will. Go on.

Nay, drag me not. We must not seem to fly.

SCENE III.—NORTH TRANSEPT OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

On the right hand a flight of steps leading to the Choir, another flight on the left, leading to the North Aisle. Winter afternoon slowly darkening. Low thunder now and then of an approaching storm. MONKS heard chanting the service. ROSAMUND kneeling.

Rosamund. O blessed saint, O glorious Benedict,—

These arm'd men in the city, these fierce faces—

Thy holy follower founded Canterbury—
Save that dear head which now is Canterbury,

Save him, he saved my life, he saved my child,

Save him, his blood would darken
Henry's name ;

Save him till all as saintly as thyself
He miss the searching flame of purgatory,
And pass at once perfect to Paradise.

[*Noise of steps and voices in the cloisters.*
Hark ! Is it they ? Coming ! He is
not here—

Not yet, thank heaven. O save him !
[*Goes up steps leading to choir.*

Becket (*entering, forced along by John of Salisbury and Grim*). No,
I tell you !

I cannot bear a hand upon my person,
Why do you force me thus against my
will ?

Grim. My lord, we force you from
your enemies.

Becket. As you would force a king
from being crown'd.

John of Salisbury. We must not force
the crown of martyrdom.

[*Service stops. Monks come down from
the stairs that lead to the choir.*

Monks. Here is the great Arch-
bishop ! He lives ! he lives !

Die with him, and be glorified together.

Becket. Together ? . . . get you
back ! go on with the office.

Monks. Come, then, with us to
vespers.

Becket. How can I come
When you so block the entry ? Back, I
say !

Go on with the office. Shall not Heaven
be served

Tho' earth's last earthquake clash'd the
minster-bells,

And the great deeps were broken up
again,

And hiss'd against the sun ?

[*Noise in the cloisters.*

Monks. The murderers, hark !
Let us hide ! let us hide !

Becket. What do these people fear ?

Monks. Those arm'd men in the
cloister.

Becket. Be not such cravens !

I will go out and meet them.

Grim and others. Shut the doors !

We will not have him slain before our
face.

[*They close the doors of the transept.*

Knocking.

Fly, fly, my lord, before they burst the
doors ! [*Knocking.*

Becket. Why, these are our own
monks who follow'd us !

And will you bolt them out, and have
them slain ?

Undo the doors : the church is not a
castle :

Knock, and it shall be open'd. Are you
deaf ?

What, have I lost authority among you ?
Stand by, make way !

[*Opens the doors. Enter Monks
from cloister.*

Come in, my friends, come in !

Nay, faster, faster !

Monks. Oh, my lord Archbishop,
A score of knights all arm'd with swords
and axes—

To the choir, to the choir !

[*Monks divide, part flying by the
stairs on the right, part by those on
the left. The rush of these last
bears Becket along with them some
way up the steps, where he is left
standing alone.*

Becket. Shall I too pass to the choir,
And die upon the Patriarchal throne
Of all my predecessors ?

John of Salisbury. No, to the crypt !
Twenty steps down. Stumble not in the
darkness,

Lest they should seize thee.

Grim. To the crypt ? no—no,
To the chapel of St. Blaise beneath the
roof !

John of Salisbury (*pointing upward
and downward*). That way, or
this ! Save thyself either way.

Becket. Oh, no, not either way, nor
any way
Save by that way which leads thro' night
to light.

Not twenty steps, but one.

And fear not I should stumble in the
darkness,

Not tho' it be their hour, the power of
darkness,
But my hour too, the power of light in
darkness !

I am not in the darkness but the light,
Seen by the Church in Heaven, the
Church on earth—

The power of life in death to make her
free !

[Enter the four Knights. John of
Salisbury flies to the altar of St.
Benedict.

Fitzurse. Here, here, King's men !

[Catches hold of the last flying Monk.

Where is the traitor Becket ?

Monk. I am not he ! I am not he,
my lord.

I am not he indeed !

Fitzurse. Hence to the fiend !

[Pushes him away.

Where is this treble traitor to the King ?

De Tracy. Where is the Archbishop,
Thomas Becket ?

Becket. Here.

No traitor to the King, but Priest of
God,

Primate of England.

[Descending into the transept.

I am he ye seek.

What would ye have of me ?

Fitzurse. Your life.

De Tracy. Your life.

De Morville. Save that you will
absolve the bishops.

Becket. Never,—

Except they make submission to the
Church.

You had my answer to that cry before.

De Morville. Why, then you are a
dead man ; flee !

Becket. I will not.

I am readier to be slain, than thou to slay.

Hugh, I know well thou hast but half a
heart

To bathe this sacred pavement with my
blood.

God pardon thee and these, but God's
full curse

Shatter you all to pieces if ye harm

One of my flock !

Fitzurse. Was not the great gate
shut ?

They are thronging in to vespers—half
the town.

We shall be overwhelm'd. Seize him
and carry him !

Come with us—nay—thou art our pri-
soner—come !

De Morville. Ay, make him prisoner,
do not harm the man.

[Fitzurse lays hold of the Arch-
bishop's pall.

Becket. Touch me not !

De Brito. How the good
priest gods himself !

He is not yet ascended to the Father.

Fitzurse. I will not only touch, but
drag thee hence.

Becket. Thou art my man, thou art
my vassal. Away !

[Flings him off till he reels, almost
to falling.

De Tracy (lays hold of the pall).

Come ; as he said, thou art our
prisoner.

Becket. Down !

[Throws him headlong.

Fitzurse (advances with drawn sword).

I told thee that I should re-
member thee !

Becket. Profligate pander !

Fitzurse. Do you hear that ?

strike, strike.

[Strikes off the Archbishop's mitre,
and wounds him in the forehead.

Becket (covers his eyes with his hand).

I do commend my cause to God, the
Virgin,

St. Denis of France and St. Alphege of
England,

And all the tutelar Saints of Canterbury.

[Grim wraps his arms about the
Archbishop.

Spare this defence, dear brother.

[Tracy has arisen, and approaches,
hesitatingly, with his sword
raised.

Fitzurse. Strike him, Tracy !

*Rosamund (rushing down steps from
the choir).* No, No, No, No !

Fitzurse. This wanton here. De
Morville,
Hold her away.

De Morville. I hold her.

*Rosamund (held back by De Morville,
and stretching out her arms).*

Mercy, mercy,

As you would hope for mercy.

Fitzurse. Strike, I say.

Grim. O God, O noble knights, O
sacrilege!

Strike our Archbishop in his own cathed-
ral!

The Pope, the King, will curse you—the
whole world

Abhor you; ye will die the death of dogs!

Nay, nay, good Tracy. [*Lifts his arm.*

Fitzurse. Answer not, but strike.

De Tracy. There is my answer then.
[*Sword falls on Grim's arm, and
glances from it, wounding
Becket.*

Grim. Mine arm is sever'd.

I can no more—fight out the good fight
—die

Conqueror.

[*Staggers into the chapel of St. Benedict.*

Becket (falling on his knees). At the
right hand of Power—
Power and great glory—for thy Church,
O Lord—

Into Thy hands, O Lord—into Thy
hands!—— [*Sinks prone.*

De Brito. This last to rid thee of a
world of brawls! [*Kills him.*]

The traitor's dead, and will arise no more.

Fitzurse. Nay, have we still'd him?

What! the great Archbishop!

Does he breathe? No?

De Tracy. No, Reginald, he is dead.
[*Storm bursts.*¹

De Morville. Will the earth gape and
swallow us?

De Brito. The deed's done—

Away!

[*De Brito, De Tracy, Fitzurse, rush
out, crying 'King's men!' De
Morville follows slowly. Flashes
of lightning thro' the Cathedral.
Rosamund seen kneeling by the
body of Becket.*

¹ A tremendous thunderstorm actually broke
over the Cathedral as the murderers were leav-
ing it.

THE CUP

A TRAGEDY

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

GALATIANS

SYNORIX, *an ex-Tetrarch.*
 SINNATUS, *a Tetrarch.*
Attendant.
 Boy.

Maid.
 PHÆBE.
 CAMMA, *wife of Sinnatus, afterwards*
Priestess in the Temple of Artemis.

ROMANS

ANTONIUS, *a Roman General.*
 PUBLIUS.

Nobleman.
Messenger.

ACT I

SCENE I.—DISTANT VIEW OF A CITY OF GALATIA

As the curtain rises, Priestesses are heard singing in the Temple. Boy discovered on a pathway among Rocks, picking grapes. A party of Roman Soldiers, guarding a prisoner in chains, come down the pathway and exeunt.

Enter SYNORIX (looking round). Singing ceases.

Synorix. Pine, beech and plane, oak,
 walnut, apricot,

Vine, cypress, poplar, myrtle, bowering-in
 The city where she dwells. She past me
 here

Three years ago when I was flying from
 My Tetrarchy to Rome. I almost touch'd
 her—

A maiden slowly moving on to music
 Among her maidens to this Temple—

O Gods!

She is my fate—else wherefore has my
 fate

Brought me again to her own city?—
 married

Since—married Sinnatus, the Tetrarch
 here—

But if he be conspirator, Rome will chain,
 Or slay him. I may trust to gain her then
 When I shall have my tetrarchy restored
 By Rome, our mistress, grateful that I
 show'd her

The weakness and the dissonance of our
 clans,

And how to crush them easily. Wretched
 race!

And once I wish'd to scourge them to the
 bones.

But in this narrow breathing-time of life
 Is vengeance for its own sake worth the
 while,

If once our ends are gain'd? and now
 this cup—

I never felt such passion for a woman.

[Brings out a cup and scroll from under his cloak.]

What have I written to her?

[Reading the scroll.]

'To the admired Camma, wife of
 Sinnatus, the Tetrarch, one who years
 ago, himself an adorer of our great god-
 dess, Artemis, beheld you afar off worship-
 ping in her Temple, and loved you for it,
 sends you this cup rescued from the burning
 of one of her shrines in a city thro' which
 he past with the Roman army: it is the
 cup we use in our marriages. Receive
 it from one who cannot at present write
 himself other than

'A GALATIAN SERVING BY FORCE IN
 THE ROMAN LEGION.'

[Turns and looks up to Boy.]

Boy, dost thou know the house of
 Sinnatus?

Boy. These grapes are for the house
 of Sinnatus—

Close to the Temple.

Synorix. Yonder?

Boy. Yes.

Synorix (aside). That I

With all my range of women should yet
shun

To meet her face to face at once! My
boy,

[*Boy comes down rocks to him.*]

Take thou this letter and this cup to
Camma,

The wife of Sinnatus.

Boy. Going or gone to-day
To hunt with Sinnatus.

Synorix. That matters not.
Take thou this cup and leave it at her
doors.

[*Gives the cup and scroll to the Boy.*]

Boy. I will, my lord.

[*Takes his basket of grapes and exit.*]

Enter ANTONIUS

*Antonius (meeting the Boy as he goes
out).* Why, whither runs the boy?

Is that the cup you rescued from the fire?

Synorix. I send it to the wife of
Sinnatus,

One half besotted in religious rites.

You come here with your soldiers to
enforce

The long-withholden tribute: you suspect
This Sinnatus of playing patriotism,

Which in your sense is treason. You
have yet

No proof against him: now this pious
cup

Is passport to their house, and open
arms

To him who gave it; and once there I
warrant

I worm thro' all their windings.

Antonius. If you prosper,

Our Senate, wearied of their tetrarchies,
Their quarrels with themselves, their
spites at Rome,

Is like enough to cancel them, and throne
One king above them all, who shall be
true

To the Roman: and from what I heard
in Rome,

'This tributary crown may fall to you.

Synorix. The king, the crown! their
talk in Rome? is it so?

[*Antonius nods.*]

Well—I shall serve Galatia taking it,
And save her from herself, and be to
Rome

More faithful than a Roman.

[*Turns and sees Camma coming.*]

Stand aside,

Stand aside; here she comes!

[*Watching Camma as she enters
with her Maid.*]

Camma (to Maid). Where is he, girl?

Maid. You know the waterfall

That in the summer keeps the mountain
side,

But after rain o'erleaps a jutting rock
And shoots three hundred feet.

Camma. The stag is there?

Maid. Seen in the thicket at the
bottom there

But yester-even.

Camma. Good then, we will climb
The mountain opposite and watch the
chase.

[*They descend the rocks and exeunt.*]

Synorix (watching her). (*Aside*) The
bust of Juno and the brows and
eyes

Of Venus; face and form unmatchable!

Antonius. Why do you look at her
so lingeringly?

Synorix. To see if years have changed
her.

Antonius (sarcastically). Love her, do
you?

Synorix. I envied Sinnatus when he
married her.

Antonius. She knows it? Ha!

Synorix. She—no, nor ev'n my face.

Antonius. Nor Sinnatus either?•

Synorix. No, nor Sinnatus.

Antonius. Hot-blooded! I have
heard them say in Rome,

That your own people cast you from their
bounds,

For some unprincipled violence to a woman,
As Rome did Tarquin.

Synorix. Well, if this were so
I here return like Tarquin—for a crown.

Antonius. And may be foil'd like
Tarquin, if you follow
Not the dry light of Rome's straight-going
policy,
But the fool-fire of love or lust, which
well
May make you lose yourself, may even
drown you
In the good regard of Rome.

Synorix. Tut—fear me not ;
I ever had my victories among women.
I am most true to Rome.

Antonius (aside). I hate the man !
What filthy tools our Senate works with !
Still

I must obey them. (*Aloud*) Fare you
well. [*Going.*]

Synorix. Farewell !

Antonius (stopping). A moment ! If
you track this Sinnatus

In any treason, I give you here an
order [*Produces a paper.*]

To seize upon him. Let me sign it.
(*Signs it.*) There

'Antonius leader of the Roman Legion.'
[*Hands the paper to Synorix. Goes
up pathway and exit.*]

Synorix. Woman again !—but I am
wiser now.

No rushing on the game—the net,—the
net.

[*Shouts of 'Sinnatus ! Sinnatus !'
Then horn.*]

[*Looking off stage.*] He comes, a rough,
bluff, simple-looking fellow.

If we may judge the kernel by the
husk,

Not one to keep a woman's fealty when
Assailed by Craft and Love. I'll join
with him :

I may reap something from him—come
upon her

Again, perhaps, to-day—her. Who are
with him ?

I see no face that knows me. Shall I
risk it ?

I am a Roman now, they dare not touch
me.

I will.

[*Enter Sinnatus, Huntsmen and hounds.*]

Fair Sir, a happy day to you !
You reck but little of the Roman here,
While you can take your pastime in the
woods.

Sinnatus. Ay, ay, why not ? What
would you with me, man ?

Synorix. I am a life-long lover of the
chase,

And tho' a stranger fain would be allow'd
To join the hunt.

Sinnatus. Your name ?

Synorix. Strato, my name.

Sinnatus. No Roman name ?

Synorix. A Greek, my lord ; you
know

That we Galatians are both Greek and
Gaul.

[*Shouts and horns in the distance.*]

Sinnatus. Hillo, the stag ! (*To
Synorix.*) What, you are all un-
furnish'd ?

Give him a bow and arrows—follow—
follow.

[*Exit, followed by Huntsmen.*]

Synorix. Slowly but surely—till I
see my way.

It is the one step in the dark beyond
Our expectation, that amazes us.

[*Distant shouts and horns.*]

Hillo ! Hillo !

[*Exit Synorix. Shouts and horns.*]

SCENE II.—A ROOM IN THE TETRARCH'S HOUSE

*Frescoed figures on the walls. Evening.
Moonlight outside. A couch with
cushions on it. A small table with a
flagon of wine, cups, plate of grapes,
etc., also the cup of Scene I. A chair
with drapery on it.*

*CAMMA enters, and opens curtains of
window*

Camma. No Sinnatus yet—and there
the rising moon.

[*Takes up a cithern and sits on couch.
Plays and sings.*]

Moon on the field and the foam,
 Moon on the waste and the wold,
 Moon bring him home, bring him home
 Safe from the dark and the cold,
 Home, sweet moon, bring him home,
 Home with the flock to the fold—
 Safe from the wolf——

(*Listening.*) Is he coming? I thought
 I heard
 A footstep. No not yet. They say that
 Rome
 Sprang from a wolf. I fear my dear
 lord mixt
 With some conspiracy against the wolf.
 This mountain shepherd never dream'd
 of Rome.

(*Sings.*) Safe from the wolf to the
 fold——
 And that great break of precipice that runs
 Thro' all the wood, where twenty years ago
 Huntsman, and hound, and deer were
 all neck-broken!
 Nay, here he comes.

Enter SINNATUS followed by SYNORIX

Sinnatus (angrily). I tell thee, my
 good fellow,
 My arrow struck the stag.
Synorix. But was it so?
 Nay, you were further off: besides the
 wind
 Went with my arrow.

Sinnatus. I am sure I struck him.
Synorix. And I am just as sure, my
 lord, I struck him.
 (*Aside.*) And I may strike your game
 when you are gone.

Camma. Come, come, we will not
 quarrel about the stag.
 I have had a weary day in watching you.
 Yours must have been a wearier. Sit
 and eat,
 And take a hunter's vengeance on the
 meats.

Sinnatus. No, no—we have eaten
 —we are heated. Wine!
Camma. Who is our guest?
Sinnatus. Strato he calls himself.
 [*Camma offers wine to Synorix, while
 Sinnatus helps himself.*]

Sinnatus. I pledge you, Strato.
 [*Drinks.*
Synorix. And I you, my lord.
 [*Drinks.*

Sinnatus (seeing the cup sent to Camma).
 What's here?

Camma. A strange gift sent to me
 to-day.

A sacred cup saved from a blazing
 shrine
 Of our great Goddess, in some city
 where
 Antonius past. I had believed that
 Rome
 Made war upon the peoples not the
 Gods.

Synorix. Most like the city rose
 against Antonius,
 Whereon he fired it, and the sacred
 shrine
 By chance was burnt along with it.

Sinnatus. Had you then
 No message with the cup?

Camma. Why, yes, see here.
 [*Gives him the scroll.*

Sinnatus (reads). 'To the admired
 Camma,—beheld you afar off—loved you
 —sends you this cup—the cup we use in
 our marriages—cannot at present write
 himself other than

'A GALATIAN SERVING BY FORCE
 IN THE ROMAN LEGION.'
 Serving by force! Were there no boughs
 to hang on,
 Rivers to drown in? Serve by force?
 No force
 Could make me serve by force.

Synorix. How then, my lord?
 The Roman is encampt without your
 city—
 The force of Rome a thousand-fold our
 own.
 Must all Galatia hang or drown her-
 self?

And you a Prince and Tetrarch in this
 province—

Sinnatus. Province!
Synorix. Well, well, they
 call it so in Rome.
Sinnatus (angrily). Province!

Synorix. A noble anger ! but Antonius
To-morrow will demand your tribute—
you,
Can you make war ? Have you alliances ?
Bithynia, Pontus, Paphlagonia ?
We have had our leagues of old with
Eastern kings.
There is my hand—if such a league there
be.

What will you do ?
Sinnatus. Not set myself abroad
And run my mind out to a random
quest

Who join'd me in the hunt. You saw
my hounds
True to the scent ; and we have two-
legg'd dogs

Among us who can smell a true occasion,
And when to bark and how.

Synorix. My good Lord Sinnatus,
I once was at the hunting of a lion.
Roused by the clamour of the chase he
woke,

Came to the front of the wood—his
monarch mane

Bristled about his quick ears—he stood
there

Staring upon the hunter. A score of
dogs

Gnaw'd at his ankles : at the last he felt
The trouble of his feet, put forth one
paw,

Slew four, and knew it not, and so
remain'd

Staring upon the hunter : and this Rome
Will crush you if you wrestle with her ;
then

Save for some slight report in her own
Senate

Scarce know what she has done.

(*Aside.*) Would I could move him,
Provoke him any way ! (*Aloud.*) The
Lady Camma,

Wise I am sure as she is beautiful,
Will close with me that to submit at once
Is better than a wholly-hopeless war,
Our gallant citizens murder'd all in vain,
Son, husband, brother gash'd to death in
vain,

And the small state more cruelly trampled
on

Than had she never moved.

Camma. Sir, I had once
A boy who died a babe ; but were he
living

And grown to man and Sinnatus will'd
it, I

Would set him in the front rank of the
fight

With scarce a pang. (*Rises.*) Sir, if a
state submit

At once, she may be blotted out at once
And swallow'd in the conqueror's
chronicle.

Whereas in wars of freedom and defence
The glory and grief of battle won or lost
Solders a race together—yea—tho' they
fail,

The names of those who fought and fell
are like

A bank'd-up fire that flashes out again
From century to century, and at last
May lead them on to victory—I hope
so—

Like phantoms of the Gods.

Sinnatus. Well spoken, wife.

Synorix (*bowing*). Madam, so well I
yield.

Sinnatus. I should not wonder
If Synorix, who has dwelt three years in
Rome

And wrought his worst against his native
land,

Returns with this Antonius.

Synorix. What is Synorix ?

Sinnatus. Galatian, and not know ?
This Synorix

Was Tetrarch here, and tyrant also—did
Dishonour to our wives.

Synorix. Perhaps you judge him
With feeble charity : being as you tell me
Tetrarch, there might be willing wives
enough

To feel dishonour, honour.

Camma. Do not say so.
I know of no such wives in all Galatia.
There may be courtesans for aught I
know

Whose life is one dishonour.

Enter ATTENDANT

Attendant (aside). My lord, the men!

Sinnatus (aside). Our anti-Roman faction?

Attendant (aside). Ay, my lord.

Synorix (overhearing). (*Aside.*) I have enough—their anti-Roman faction.

Sinnatus (aloud). Some friends of mine would speak with me without.

You, Strato, make good cheer till I return. [*Exit.*]

Synorix. I have much to say, no time to say it in.

First, lady, know myself am that Galatian Who sent the cup.

Camma. I thank you from my heart.

Synorix. Then that I serve with Rome to serve Galatia.

That is my secret: keep it, or you sell me

To torment and to death. [*Coming closer.* For your ear only—

I love you—for your love to the great Goddess.

The Romans sent me here a spy upon you,

To draw you and your husband to your doom.

I'd sooner die than do it.

[*Takes out paper given him by Antonius.* This paper sign'd

Antonius—will you take it, read it? there!

Camma. (*Reads.*) 'You are to seize on Sinnatus,—if——'

Synorix. (*Snatches paper.*) No more.. What follows is for no wife's eyes. O

Camma,
Rome has a glimpse of this conspiracy;
Rome never yet hath spar'd conspirator.
Horrible! flaying, scourging, crucifying—

Camma. I am tender enough. Why do you practise on me?

Synorix. Why should I practise on you? How you wrong me!

I am sure of being every way malign'd.

And if you should betray me to your husband——

Camma. Will you betray him by this order?

Synorix. See,
I tear it all to pieces, never dream'd
Of acting on it. [*Tears the paper.*]

Camma. I owe you thanks for ever.

Synorix. Hath Sinnatus never told you of this plot?

Camma. What plot?

Synorix. A child's sand-castle on the beach

For the next wave—all seen,—all calculated,

All known by Rome. No chance for Sinnatus.

Camma. Why said you not as much to my brave Sinnatus?

Synorix. Brave—ay—too brave, too over-confident,

Too like to ruin himself, and you, and me!

Who else, with this black thunderbolt of Rome

Above him, would have chased the stag to-day

In the full face of all the Roman camp?

A miracle that they let him home again,
Not caught, maim'd, blinded him.

[*Camma shudders.*]

(*Aside.*) I have made her tremble.
(*Aloud.*) I know they mean to torture him to death.

I dare not tell him how I came to know it;

I durst not trust him with—my serving Rome

To serve Galatia: you heard him on the letter.

Not say as much? I all but said as much.

I am sure I told him that his plot was folly.

I say it to you—you are wiser—Rome knows all,

But you know not the savagery of Rome.

Camma. O—have you power with Rome? use it for him!

Synorix. Alas! I have no such power with Rome. All that Lies with Antonius.

[*As if struck by a sudden thought. Comes over to her.*

He will pass to-morrow In the gray dawn before the Temple doors.

You have beauty,—O great beauty,—and Antonius,

So gracious toward women, never yet Flung back a woman's prayer. Plead to him,

I am sure you will prevail.

Camma. Still—I should tell My husband.

Synorix. Will he let you plead for him

To a Roman?

Camma. I fear not.

Synorix. Then do not tell him. Or tell him, if you will, when you return, When you have charm'd our general into mercy,

And all is safe again. O dearest lady,
[*Murmurs of 'Synorix! Synorix!' heard outside.*

Think,—torture,—death,—and come.

Camma. I will, I will. And I will not betray you.

Synorix (aside). (*As Sinnatus enters.*) Stand apart.

Enter SINNATUS and ATTENDANT

Sinnatus. Thou art that Synorix! One whom thou hast wrong'd Without there, knew thee with Antonius. They howl for thee, to rend thee head from limb.

Synorix. I am much malign'd. I thought to serve Galatia.

Sinnatus. Serve thyself first, villain! They shall not harm

My guest within my house. There! (*points to door*) there! this door Opens upon the forest! Out, begone! Henceforth I am thy mortal enemy.

Synorix. However I thank thee (*draws his sword*); thou hast saved my life. [*Exit.*

Sinnatus. (*To Attendant.*) Return and tell them Synorix is not here.

[*Exit Attendant.*
What did that villain Synorix say to you?

Camma. Is he—that—Synorix?

Sinnatus. Wherefore should you doubt it?

One of the men there knew him.

Camma. Only one, And he perhaps mistaken in the face.

Sinnatus. Come, come, could he deny it? What did he say?

Camma. What *should* he say?

Sinnatus. What *should* he say, my wife?

He should say this, that being Tetrarch once

His own true people cast him from their doors

Like a base coin.

Camma. Not kindly to them?

Sinnatus. Kindly?

O the most kindly Prince in all the world!

Would clap his honest citizens on the back,

Bandy their own rude jests with them, be curious

About the welfare of their babes, their wives,

O ay—their wives—their wives. What should he say?

He should say nothing to my wife if I Were by to throttle him! He steep'd himself

In all the lust of Rome. How should you guess

What manner of beast it is?

Camma. Yet he seem'd kindly, And said he loathed the cruelties that Rome

Wrought on her vassals.

Sinnatus. Did he, *honest* man?

Camma. And you, that seldom brook the stranger here,

Have let him hunt the stag with you to-day.

Sinnatus. I warrant you now, he said he struck the stag.

Camma. Why no, he never touch'd
upon the stag.

Sinnatus. Why so I said, *my* arrow.
Well, to sleep.

[*Goes to close door.*]

Camma. Nay, close not yet the door
upon a night
That looks half day.

Sinnatus. True ; and my friends may
spy him
And slay him as he runs.

Camma. He is gone already.
Oh look,—yon grove upon the mountain,
—white

In the sweet moon as with a lovelier
snow !

But what a blotch of blackness under-
neath !

Sinnatus, you remember—yea, you must,
That there three years ago—the vast
vine-bowers

Ran to the summit of the trees, and
dropt

Their streamers earthward, which a
breeze of May

Took ever and anon, and open'd out
The purple zone of hill and heaven ;
there

You told your love ; and like the sway-
ing vines—

Yea,—with our eyes,—our hearts, our
prophet hopes

Let in the happy distance, and that all
But cloudless heaven which we have
found together

In our three married years ! You kiss'd
me there

For the first time. *Sinnatus*, kiss me
now.

Sinnatus. First kiss. (*Kisses her.*)
There then. You talk almost as
if it

Might be the last.

Camma. Will you not eat a little ?

Sinnatus. No, no, we found a goat-
herd's hut and shared

His fruits and milk. Liar ! You will
believe

Now that he never struck the stag—a
brave one

Which you shall see to-morrow.

Camma. I rise to-morrow
In the gray dawn, and take this holy cup
To lodge it in the shrine of *Artemis*.

Sinnatus. Good !

Camma. If I be not back in
half an hour,
Come after me.

Sinnatus. What ! is there danger ?

Camma. Nay,
None that I know : 'tis but a step from
here

To the Temple.

Sinnatus. All my brain is full of
sleep.

Wake me before you go, I'll after you—
After me now ! [*Closes door and exit.*]

Camma (*drawing curtains*). Your
shadow. *Synorix*—

His face was not malignant, and he said
That men malign'd him. Shall I go ?
Shall I go ?

Death, torture—

'He never yet flung back a woman's
prayer'—

I go, but I will have my dagger with
me. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—SAME AS SCENE I.

DAWN

Music and Singing in the Temple

Enter SYNORIX watchfully, after him
PUBLIUS and SOLDIERS

Synorix. *Publius* !

Publius. Here !

Synorix. Do you re-
member what I told you ?

Publius. When you cry 'Rome, Rome,'
to seize

On whomsoever may be talking with
you,

Or man, or woman, as traitors unto
Rome.

Synorix. Right. Back again. How
many of you are there ?

Publius. Some half a score.

[*Exeunt Soldiers and Publius.*]

Synorix. I have my guard
about me.
I need not fear the crowd that hunted me
Across the woods, last night. I hardly
gain'd
The camp at midnight. Will she come
to me
Now that she knows me *Synorix*? Not
if *Sinnatus*
Has told her all the truth about me.
Well,
I cannot help the mould that I was cast
in.
I fling all that upon my fate, my star.
I know that I am genial, I would be
Happy, and make all others happy so
They did not thwart me. Nay, she will
not come.
Yet if she be a true and loving wife
She may, perchance, to save this husband.
Ay!
See, see, my white bird stepping toward
the snare.
Why now I count it all but miracle,
That this brave heart of mine should
shake me so,
As helplessly as some unbearded boy's
When first he meets his maiden in a
bower.
[Enter Camma (with cup).]
The lark first takes the sunlight on his
wing,
But you, twin sister of the morning
star,
Forelead the sun.
Camma. Where is Antonius?
Synorix. Not here as yet. You are
too early for him.
[She crosses towards Temple.]
Synorix. Nay, whither go you now?
Camma. To lodge this cup
Within the holy shrine of *Artemis*,
And so return.
Synorix. To find Antonius here.
*[She goes into the Temple, he looks
after her.]*
The loveliest life that ever drew the
light
From heaven to brood upon her, and
enrich

Earth with her shadow! I trust she *will*
return.
These Romans dare not violate the
Temple.
No, I must lure my game into the camp.
A woman I could live and die for.
What!
Die for a woman, what new faith is
this?
I am not mad, not sick, not old enough
To doat on one alone. Yes, mad for
her,
Camma the stately, *Camma* the great-
hearted,
So mad, I fear some strange and evil
chance
Coming upon me, for by the Gods I
seem
Strange to myself.

Re-enter CAMMA

Camma. Where is Antonius?
Synorix. Where? As I said before,
you are still too early.
Camma. Too early to be here alone
with thee:
For whether men malign thy name, or
no,
It bears an evil savour among women.
Where is Antonius? *(Loud.)*
Synorix. Madam, as you know
The camp is half a league without the
city;
If you will walk with me we needs must
meet
Antonius coming, or at least shall find
him
There in the camp.
Camma. No, not one step with thee.
Where is Antonius? *(Louder.)*
Synorix *(advancing towards her).*
Then for your own sake,
Lady, I say it with all gentleness,
And for the sake of *Sinnatus* your
husband,
I must compel you.
Camma *(drawing her dagger).* Stay!
—too near is death.
Synorix *(disarming her).* Is it not
easy to disarm a woman?

Enter SINNATUS (seizes him from behind by the throat).

Synorix (throttled and scarce audible).

Rome! Rome!

Sinnatus. Adulterous dog!

Synorix (stabbing him with Camma's dagger). What! will you have it?

[Camma utters a cry and runs to Sinnatus.]

Sinnatus (falls backward). I have it in my heart—to the Temple—fly—

For my sake—or they seize on thee. Remember!

Away—farewell! *[Dies.]*

Camma (runs up the steps into the Temple, looking back). Farewell!

Synorix (seeing her escape). The women of the Temple drag her in.

Publius! Publius! No, Antonius would not suffer me to break into the sanctuary. She hath escaped.

[Looking down at Sinnatus.] 'Adulterous dog!' that red-faced rage at me!

Then with one quick short stab—eternal peace.

So end all passions. Then what use in passions?

To warm the cold bounds of our dying life

And, lest we freeze in mortal apathy, Employ us, heat us, quicken us, help us, keep us

From seeing all too near that urn, those ashes

Which all must be. Well used, they serve us well.

I heard a saying in Egypt, that ambition Is like the sea wave, which the more you drink,

The more you thirst—yea—drink too much, as men

Have done on rafts of wreck—it drives you mad.

I will be no such wreck, am no such gamester

As, having won the stake, would dare the chance

Of double, or losing all. The Roman Senate,

For I have always play'd into their hands, Means me the crown. And Camma for my bride—

The people love her—if I win her love, They too will cleave to me, as one with her.

There then I rest, Rome's tributary king. *[Looking down on Sinnatus.]*

Why did I strike him?—having proof enough

Against the man, I surely should have left That stroke to Rome. He saved my life too. Did he?

It seem'd so. I have play'd the sudden fool. And that sets her against me—for the moment.

Camma—well, well, I never found the woman

I could not force or wheedle to my will. She will be glad at last to wear my crown. And I will make Galatia prosperous too, And we will chirp among our vines, and smile

At bygone things till that *(pointing to Sinnatus)* eternal peace.

Rome! Rome!

[Enter Publius and Soldiers.] Twice I cried Rome. Why came ye not before?

Publius. Why come we now? Whom shall we seize upon?

Synorix (pointing to the body of Sinnatus). The body of that dead traitor Sinnatus.

Bear him away.

Music and Singing in Temple.

ACT II

SCENE.—INTERIOR OF THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS

Small gold gates on platform in front of the veil before the colossal statue of the Goddess, and in the centre of the Temple a tripod altar, on which is a lighted lamp. Lamps (lighted) suspended between each pillar. Tripods, vases, garlands of flowers, etc., about

stage. Altar at back close to Goddess, with two cups. Solemn music. Priestesses decorating the Temple.

(The Chorus of PRIESTESSES sing as they enter)

Artemis, Artemis, hear us, O Mother, hear us, and bless us !

Artemis, thou that art life to the wind, to the wave, to the glebe, to the fire !

Hear thy people who praise thee ! O help us from all that oppress us !

Hear thy priestesses hymn thy glory ! O yield them all their desire !

Priestess. Phœbe, that man from Synorix, who has been

So oft to see the Priestess, waits once more Before the Temple.

Phæbe. We will let her know.

[Signs to one of the Priestesses, who goes out.]

Since Camma fled from Synorix to our Temple,

And for her beauty, stateliness, and power, Was chosen Priestess here, have you not mark'd

Her eyes were ever on the marble floor ? To-day they are fixt and bright—they look straight out.

Hath she made up her mind to marry him ?

Priestess. To marry him who stabb'd her Sinnatus.

You will not easily make me credit that.

Phæbe. Ask her.

Enter CAMMA as Priestess (in front of the curtains)

Priestess. You will not marry Synorix ?

Camma. My girl, I am the bride of Death, and only

Marry the dead.

Priestess. Not Synorix then ?

Camma. My girl,

At times this oracle of great Artemis Has no more power than other oracles To speak directly.

Phæbe. Will you speak to him, The messenger from Synorix who waits Before the Temple ?

Camma. Why not ? Let him enter.

[Comes forward on to step by tripod.]

Enter a MESSENGER

Messenger (kneels). Greeting and health from Synorix ! More than once

You have refused his hand. When last I saw you,

You all but yielded. He entreats you now For your last answer. When he struck at Sinnatus—

As I have many a time declared to you— He knew not at the moment who had fasten'd

About his throat—he begs you to forget it

As scarce his act :—a random stroke : all else

Was love for you : he prays you to believe him.

Camma. I pray him to believe—that I believe him.

Messenger. Why that is well. You mean to marry him ?

Camma. I mean to marry him—if that be well.

Messenger. This very day the Romans crown him king

For all his faithful services to Rome.

He wills you then this day to marry him, And so be throned together in the sight Of all the people, that the world may know You twain are reconciled, and no more feuds

Disturb our peaceful vassalage to Rome.

Camma. To-day ? Too sudden. I will brood upon it.

When do they crown him ?

Messenger. Even now.

Camma. And where ?

Messenger. Here by your temple.

Camma. Come once more to me Before the crowning,—I will answer you.

[Exit Messenger.]

Phæbe. Great Artemis ! O Camma, can it be well,

Or good, or wise, that you should clasp a hand

Red with the sacred blood of Sinnatus ?

Camma. Good ! mine own dagger driven by Synorix found

All good in the true heart of Sinnatus,
And quench'd it there for ever. Wise !
Life yields to death and wisdom bows to

Fate,

Is wisest, doing so. Did not this man
Speak well ? We cannot fight imperial

Rome,

But he and I are both Galatian-born,
And tributary sovereigns, he and I
Might teach this Rome—from knowledge
of our people—

Where to lay on her tribute—heavily here
And lightly there. Might I not live for
that,

And drown all poor self-passion in the
sense

Of public good ?

Phæbe. I am sure you will not
marry him.

Camma. Are you so sure ? I pray
you wait and see.

[*Shouts (from the distance),*
'Synorix ! Synorix !']

Camma. Synorix, Synorix ! So they
cried Sinnatus

Not so long since—they sicken me. The
One

Who shifts his policy suffers something,
must

Accuse himself, excuse himself ; the
Many

Will feel no shame to give themselves the
lie.

Phæbe. Most like it was the Roman
soldier shouted.

Camma. Their shield-borne patriot
of the morning star

Hang'd at mid-day, their traitor of the
dawn

The clamour'd darling of their afternoon !
And that same head they would have
play'd at ball with

And kick'd it featureless—they now
would crown.

[*Flourish of trumpets.*

Enter a Galatian NOBLEMAN with crown
on a cushion.

Noble (kneels). Greeting and health
from Synorix. He sends you

This diadem of the first Galatian Queen,
That you may feed your fancy on the
glory of it,

And join your life this day with his, and
wear it

Beside him on his throne. He waits
your answer.

Camma. Tell him there is one shadow
among the shadows,

One ghost of all the ghosts—as yet so
new,

So strange among them—such an alien
there,

So much of husband in it still—that if
The shout of Synorix and Camma sit-
ting

Upon one throne, should reach it, it
would rise

He ! . . . HE, with that red star between
the ribs,

And my knife there—and blast the king
and me,

And blanch the crowd with horror. I
dare not, sir !

Throne him—and then the marriage—ay
and tell him

That I accept the diadem of Galatia—

[*All are amazed.*

Yea, that ye saw me crown myself
withal. [*Puts on the crown.*

I wait him his crown'd queen.

Noble. So will I tell him. [*Exit.*

Music. Two Priestesses go up the steps
before the shrine, draw the curtains on
either side (discovering the Goddess),
then open the gates and remain on
steps, one on either side, and kneel.
A priestess goes off and returns with
a veil of marriage, then assists Phæbe
to veil Camma. At the same time
Priestesses enter and stand on either
side of the Temple. Camma and all the
Priestesses kneel, raise their hands to the
Goddess, and bow down.

[*Shouts, 'Synorix ! Synorix !' All rise.*

Camma. Fling wide the doors and
let the new-made children
Of our imperial mother see the show.

[*Sunlight pours through the doors.*

I have no heart to do it. (*To Phæbe.*)
Look for me!

[*Crouches. Phæbe looks out.*

[*Shouts, 'Synorix! Synorix!'*

Phæbe. He climbs the throne. Hot
blood, ambition, pride
So bloat and redden his face—O would
it were

His third last apoplexy! O bestial!

O how unlike our goodly Sinnatus.

Camma (on the ground). You wrong

him surely; far as the face goes

A goodlier-looking man than Sinnatus.

Phæbe (aside). How dare she say it?

I could hate her for it

But that she is distracted.

[*A flourish of trumpets.*

Camma. Is he crown'd?

Phæbe. Ay, there they crown him.

[*Crowd without shout, 'Synorix!*

Synorix!'

[*A Priestess brings a box of spices to*

*Camma, who throws them on the
altar-flame.*

Camma. Rouse the dead altar-flame,
fling in the spices,

Nard, Cinnamon, amomum, benzoin.

Let all the air reel into a mist of odour,

As in the midmost heart of Paradise.

Lay down the Lydian carpets for the
king,

The king should pace on purple to his
bride,

And music there to greet my lord the
king. [*Music.*

(*To Phæbe.*) Dost thou remember when

I wedded Sinnatus?

Ay, thou wast there—whether from
maiden fears

Or reverential love for him I loved,

Or some strange second-sight, the mar-
riage cup

Wherefrom we make libation to the
Goddess

So shook within my hand, that the red
wine

Ran down the marble and lookt like
blood, like blood.

Phæbe. I do remember your first-
marriage fears.

Camma. I have no fears at this my
second marriage.

See here—I stretch my hand out—hold
it there.

How steady it is!

Phæbe. Steady enough to stab him!

Camma. O hush! O peace! This
violence ill becomes

The silence of our Temple. Gentleness,

Low words best chime with this solemn-
nity.

*Enter a procession of Priestesses and
Children bearing garlands and golden
goblets, and strewing flowers.*

*Enter SYNORIX (as King, with gold laurel-
wreath crown and purple robes), fol-
lowed by ANTONIUS, PUBLIUS, Noble-
men, Guards, and the Populace.*

Camma. Hail, King!

Synorix. Hail, Queen!

The wheel of Fate has roll'd me to the
top.

I would that happiness were gold, that I

Might cast my largess of it to the crowd!

I would that every man made feast to-
day

Beneath the shadow of our pines and
planes!

For all my truer life begins to-day.

The past is like a travell'd land now sunk

Below the horizon—like a barren shore

That grew salt weeds, but now all
drown'd in love

And glittering at full tide—the bounteous
bays

And havens filling with a blissful sea.

Nor speak I now too mightily, being
King

And happy! happiest, Lady, in my
power

To make you happy.

Camma. Yes, sir.

Synorix. Our Antonius,

Our faithful friend of Rome, tho' Rome
may set

A free foot where she will, yet of his
courtesy

Entreats he may be present at our
marriage.

Camma. Let him come — a legion
with him, if he will.

(*To Antonius.*) Welcome, my lord An-
tonius, to our Temple.

(*To Synorix.*) You on this side the altar.
(*To Antonius.*) You on that.

Call first upon the Goddess, Synorix.

[*All face the Goddess. Priestesses,
Children, Populace, and Guards
kneel—the others remain standing.*

Synorix. O Thou, that dost inspire
the germ with life,

The child, a thread within the house of
birth,

And give him limbs, then air, and send
him forth

The glory of his father—Thou whose
breath

Is balmy wind to robe our hills with
grass,

And kindle all our vales with myrtle-
blossom,

And roll the golden oceans of our grain,
And sway the long grape-bunches of our
vines,

And fill all hearts with fatness and the
lust

Of plenty—make me happy in my
marriage!

Chorus (chanting). Artemis, Artemis,
hear him, Ionian Artemis!

Camma. O Thou that slayest the
babe within the womb

Or in the being born, or after slayest him
As boy or man, great Goddess, whose
storm-voice

Unsockets the strong oak, and rears his
root

Beyond his head, and strows our fruits,
and lays

Our golden grain, and runs to sea and
makes it

Foam over all the fleeted wealth of kings
And peoples, hear.

Whose arrow is the plague—whose quick
flash splits

The mid-sea mast, and rifts the tower to
the rock,

And hurls the victor's column down with
him

That crowns it, hear.

Who causeth the safe earth to shudder
and gape,

And gulf and flatten in her closing chasm
Domed cities, hear.

Whose lava-torrents blast and blacken a
province

To a cinder, hear.

Whose winter-cataracts find a realm and
leave it

A waste of rock and ruin, hear. I call thee
To make my marriage prosper to my
wish!

Chorus. Artemis, Artemis, hear her,
Ephesian Artemis!

Camma. Artemis, Artemis, hear me,
Galatian Artemis!

I call on our own Goddess in our own
Temple.

Chorus. Artemis, Artemis, hear her,
Galatian Artemis!

[*Thunder. All rise.*

Synorix (aside). Thunder! Ay, ay,
the storm was drawing hither

Across the hills when I was being
crown'd.

I wonder if I look as pale as she?

Camma. Art thou—still bent—on
marrying?

Synorix. Surely—yet
These are strange words to speak to
Artemis.

Camma. Words are not always what
they seem, my King.

I will be faithful to thee till thou die.

Synorix. I thank thee, Camma,—I
thank thee.

Camma (turning to Antonius). An-
tonius,

Much graced are we that our Queen
Rome in you

Deigns to look in upon our barbarisms.

[*Turns, goes up steps to altar before
the Goddess. Takes a cup from
off the altar. Holds it towards
Antonius. Antonius goes up to
the foot of the steps opposite to
Synorix.*

You see this cup, my lord.

[*Gives it to him.*

Antonius. Most curious !
The many-breasted mother Artemis
Emboss'd upon it.

Camma. It is old, I know not
How many hundred years. Give it me
again.

It is the cup belonging our own Temple.
[*Puts it back on altar, and takes up
the cup of Act I. Showing it to
Antonius.*

Here is another sacred to the Goddess,
The gift of Synorix ; and the Goddess,
being

For this most grateful, wills, thro' me
her Priestess,
In honour of his gift and of our marriage,

That Synorix should drink from his own
cup.

Synorix. I thank thee, Camma,—I
thank thee.

Camma. For—my lord—
It is our ancient custom in Galatia
That ere two souls be knit for life and
death,

They two should drink together from one
cup,

In symbol of their married unity,
Making libation to the Goddess. Bring me
The costly wines we use in marriages.

[*They bring in a large jar of wine.*

Camma pours wine into cup.
(*To Synorix.*) See here, I fill it. (*To
Antonius.*) Will you drink, my
lord?

Antonius. I? Why should I? I
am not to be married.

Camma. But that might bring a
Roman blessing on us.

Antonius (refusing cup). Thy pardon,
Priestess !

Camma. Thou art in the right.
This blessing is for Synorix and for me.
See first I make libation to the Goddess,

[*Makes libation.*

And now I drink.

[*Drinks and fills the cup again.*

Thy turn, Galatian King.
Drink and drink deep—our marriage will
be fruitful.

Drink and drink deep, and thou wilt
make me happy.

[*Synorix goes up to her. She hands
him the cup. He drinks.*

Synorix. There, Camma ! I have
almost drain'd the cup—

A few drops left.

Camma. Libation to the Goddess.

[*He throws the remaining drops on
the altar and gives Camma the cup.*

Camma (placing the cup on the altar).
Why then the Goddess hears.

[*Comes down and forward to tripod.*
Antonius follows.

Antonius,

Where wast thou on that morning when
I came

To plead to thee for Sinnatus's life,
Beside this temple half a year ago ?

Antonius. I never heard of this re-
quest of thine.

*Synorix (coming forward hastily to foot
of tripod steps).* I sought him and
I could not find him. Pray
you,

Go on with the marriage rites.

Camma. *Antonius*——

'Camma !' who spake ?

Antonius. Not I.

Phæbe. Nor any here.

Camma. I am all but sure that some
one spake. *Antonius,*
If you had found him plotting against
Rome,

Would you have tortured Sinnatus to
death ?

Antonius. No thought was mine of
torture or of death,

But had I found him plotting, I had
counsell'd him

To rest from vain resistance. Rome is
fated

To rule the world. Then, if he had not
listen'd,

I might have sent him prisoner to Rome.

Synorix. Why do you palter with the
ceremony ?

Go on with the marriage rites.

Camma. They are finish'd.

Synorix. How !

Camma. Thou hast drunk deep
enough to make me happy.

Dost thou not feel the love I bear to thee
Glow thro' thy veins?

Synorix. The love I bear to thee
Glow thro' my veins since first I look'd
on thee.

But wherefore slur the perfect ceremony?
The sovereign of Galatia weds his Queen.
Let all be done to the fullest in the sight
Of all the Gods.

Nay, rather than so clip
The flowery robe of Hymen, we would
add

Some golden fringe of gorgeousness beyond
Old use, to make the day memorial, when
Synorix, first King, Camma, first Queen
o' the Realm,

Drew here the richest lot from Fate, to
live

And die together.

This pain—what is it?—again?
I had a touch of this last year—in—
Rome.

Yes, yes. (*To Antonius.*) Your arm—
a moment—It will pass.

I reel beneath the weight of utter joy—
This all too happy day, crown—queen at
once. [*Staggers.*]

O all ye Gods—Jupiter!—Jupiter!
[*Falls backward.*]

Camma. Dost thou cry out upon the
Gods of Rome?

Thou art Galatian-born. Our Artemis
Has vanquish'd their Diana.

Synorix (*on the ground*). I am
poison'd.

She—close the Temple door. Let her
not fly.

Camma (*leaning on tripod*). Have I
not drunk of the same cup with
thee?

Synorix. Ay, by the Gods of Rome
and all the world,

She too—she too—the bride! the
Queen! and I—

Monstrous! I that loved her.

Camma. I loved him.

Synorix. O murderous mad-woman!
I pray you lift me

And make me walk awhile. I have
heard these poisons
May be walk'd down.

[*Antonius and Publius raise him up.*]

My feet are tons of lead,
They will break in the earth—I am
sinking—hold me—

Let me alone.

[*They leave him; he sinks down on
ground.*]

Too late—thought myself wise—
A woman's dupe. Antonius, tell the
Senate

I have been most true to Rome—would
have been true

To her—if—if—— [*Falls as if dead.*
Camma (*coming and leaning over him*).]

So falls the throne of an hour.

Synorix (*half rising*). Throne? is it
thou? the Fates are throned,
not we—

Not guilty of ourselves—thy doom and
mine—

Thou—coming my way too—Camma—
good-night. [*Dies.*]

Camma (*upheld by weeping Priestesses*).

Thy way? poor worm, crawl
down thine own black hole

To the lowest Hell. Antonius, is he
there?

I meant thee to have follow'd—better
thus.

Nay, if my people must be thralls of
Rome,

He is gentle, tho' a Roman.

[*Sinks back into the arms of the Priestesses.*
Antonius.]

Thou art one
With thine own people, and though a
Roman I

Forgive thee, Camma.

Camma (*raising herself*). 'CAMMA!'
—why there again

I am most sure that some one call'd. O
women,

Ye will have Roman masters. I am
glad

I shall not see it. Did not some old
Greek

Say death was the chief good? He had
my fate for it,

Poison'd. (*Sinks back again.*) Have I
the crown on? I will go
To meet him, crown'd! crown'd victor
of my will—
On my last voyage—but the wind has
fail'd—
Growing dark too—but light enough to
row.
Row to the blessed Isles! the blessed
Isles!—
Sinnatus!

Why comes he not to meet me? It is
the crown
Offends him—and my hands are too sleepy
To lift it off. [*Phœbe takes the crown off.*]
Who touch'd me then? I thank you.
[*Rises, with outspread arms*]
There—league on league of ever-shining
shore
Beneath an ever-rising sun—I see him—
'Camma, Camma!' Sinnatus, Sinnatus!
[*Dies.*]

THE FALCON

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE COUNT FEDERIGO DEGLI ALBERIGHI.

FILIPPO, *Count's foster-brother.*

THE LADY GIOVANNA.

ELISABETTA, *the Count's nurse.*

SCENE. — AN ITALIAN COTTAGE.

CASTLE AND MOUNTAINS SEEN
THROUGH WINDOW.

ELISABETTA *discovered seated on stool in window darning. The Count with Falcon on his hand comes down through the door at back. A withered wreath on the wall.*

Elisabetta. So, my lord, the Lady Giovanna, who hath been away so long, came back last night with her son to the castle.

Count. Hear that, my bird! Art thou not jealous of her?

My princess of the cloud, my plumed purveyor,

My far-eyed queen of the winds—thou that canst soar

Beyond the morning lark, and howsoe'er Thy quarry wind and wheel, swoop down upon him

Eagle-like, lightning-like—strike, make his feathers

Glance in mid heaven.

[*Crosses to chair.*

I would thou hadst a mate!

Thy breed will die with thee, and mine with me:

I am as lone and loveless as thyself.

[*Sits in chair.*

Giovanna here! Ay, ruffle thyself—be jealous!

Thou should'st be jealous of her. Tho' I bred thee

The full-train'd marvel of all falconry, And love thee and thou me, yet if Giovanna

Be here again—No, no! Buss me, my bird!

The stately widow has no heart for me.

Thou art the last friend left me upon earth—

No, no again to that. [*Rises and turns.*

My good old nurse,

I had forgotten thou wast sitting there.

Elisabetta. Ay, and forgotten thy foster-brother too.

Count. Bird-babble for my falcon!

Let it pass.

What art thou doing there?

Elisabetta. Darning, your lordship.

We cannot flaunt it in new feathers now:

Nay, if we *will* buy diamond necklaces

To please our lady, we must darn, my lord.

This old thing here (*points to necklace round her neck*),

they are but blue beads—my Piero, God rest his honest soul, he bought 'em for me,

Ay, but he knew I meant to marry him.

How couldst thou do it, my son? How couldst thou do it?

Count. She saw it at a dance, upon a neck

Less lovely than her own, and long'd for it.

Elisabetta. She told thee as much?

Count. No, no—a friend of hers.

Elisabetta. Shame on her that she took it at thy hands,

She rich enough to have bought it for herself!

Count. She would have robb'd me then of a great pleasure.

Elisabetta. But hath she yet return'd thy love?

Count.

Not yet!

Elisabetta. She should return thy necklace then.

Count. Ay, if
She knew the giver; but I bound the seller

To silence, and I left it privily
At Florence, in her palace.

Elisabetta. And sold thine own
To buy it for her. She not know? She knows

There's none such other——

Count. Madman anywhere.
Speak freely, tho' to call a madman mad

Will hardly help to make him sane again.

Enter FILIPPO

Filippo. Ah, the women, the women !
Ah, Monna Giovanna, you here again !
you that have the face of an angel and
the heart of a—that's too positive ! You
that have a score of lovers and have not
a heart for any of them—that's positive-
negative : you that have *not* the head of
a toad, and *not* a heart like the jewel in
it—that's too negative ; you that have a
cheek like a peach and a heart like the
stone in it—that's positive again—that's
better !

Elisabetta. Sh—sh—Filippo !

Filippo (turns half round). Here has
our master been a-glorifying and a-velvet-
ing and a-silking himself, and a-peacock-
ing and a-spreading to catch her eye for
a dozen year, till he hasn't an eye left in
his own tail to flourish among the pea-
hens, and all along o' you, Monna Gio-
vanna, all along o' you !

Elisabetta. Sh—sh—Filippo ! Can't
you hear that you are saying behind his
back what you see you are saying afore
his face ?

Count. Let him—he never spares
me to my face !

Filippo. No, my lord, I never spare
your lordship to your lordship's face, nor
behind your lordship's back, nor to right,
nor to left, nor to round about and back
to your lordship's face again, for I'm
honest, your lordship.

Count. Come, come, Filippo, what
is there in the larder ?

[*Elisabetta crosses to fireplace and
puts on wood.*]

Filippo. Shelves and hooks, shelves
and hooks, and when I see the shelves I
am like to hang myself on the hooks.

Count. No bread ?

Filippo. Half a breakfast for a rat !

Count. Milk ?

Filippo. Three laps for a cat !

Count. Cheese ?

Filippo. A supper for twelve mites.

Count. Eggs ?

Filippo. One, but addled.

Count. No bird ?

Filippo. Half a tit and a hern's bill.

Count. Let be thy jokes and thy
jerks, man ! Anything or nothing ?

Filippo. Well, my lord, if all-but-
nothing be anything, and one plate of
dried prunes be all-but-nothing, then
there is anything in your lordship's larder
at your lordship's service, if your lord-
ship care to call for it.

Count. Good mother, happy was the
prodigal son,

For he return'd to the rich father ; I
But add my poverty to thine. And all
Thro' following of my fancy. Pray thee
make

Thy slender meal out of those scraps and
shreds

Filippo spoke of. As for him and me,
There sprouts a salad in the garden still.
(*To the Falcon.*) Why didst thou miss
thy quarry yester-even ?

To-day, my beauty, thou must dash us
down

Our dinner from the skies. Away,
Filippo !

[*Exit, followed by Filippo.*]

Elisabetta. I knew it would come to
this. She has beggared him. I always
knew it would come to this ! (*Goes up
to table as if to resume darning, and
looks out of window.*) Why, as I live,
there is Monna Giovanna coming down
the hill from the castle. Stops and
stares at our cottage. Ay, ay ! stare at

it: it's all you have left us. Shame on you! *She* beautiful: sleek as a miller's mouse! Meal enough, meat enough, well fed; but beautiful—bah! Nay, see, why she turns down the path through our little vineyard, and I sneezed three times this morning. Coming to visit my lord, for the first time in her life too! Why, bless the saints! I'll be bound to confess her love to him at last. I forgive her, I forgive her! I knew it would come to this—I always knew it must come to this! (*Going up to door during latter part of speech and opens it.*) Come in, Madonna, come in. (*Retires to front of table and curtsies as the Lady Giovanna enters, then moves chair towards the hearth.*) Nay, let me place this chair for your ladyship.

[*Lady Giovanna moves slowly down stage, then crosses to chair, looking about her, bows as she sees the Madonna over fireplace, then sits in chair.*]

Lady Giovanna. Can I speak with the Count?

Elisabetta. Ay, my lady, but won't you speak with the old woman first, and tell her all about it and make her happy? for I've been on my knees every day for these half-dozen years in hope that the saints would send us this blessed morning; and he always took you so kindly, he always took the world so kindly. When he was a little one, and I put the bitters on my breast to wean him, he made a wry mouth at it, but he took it so kindly, and your ladyship has given him bitters enough in this world, and he never made a wry mouth at you, he always took you so kindly—which is more than I did, my lady, more than I did—and he so handsome—and bless your sweet face, you look as beautiful this morning as the very Madonna her own self—and better late than never—but come when they will—then or now—it's all for the best, come when they will—they are made by the blessed saints—these marriages.

[*Raises her hands.*]

Lady Giovanna. Marriages? I shall never marry again!

Elisabetta (*rises and turns*). Shame on her then!

Lady Giovanna. Where is the Count?
Elisabetta. Just gone

To fly his falcon.

Lady Giovanna. Call him back and say

I come to breakfast with him.

Elisabetta. Holy mother!

To breakfast! Oh sweet saints! one plate of prunes!

Well, Madam, I will give your message to him. [*Exit.*]

Lady Giovanna. His falcon, and I come to ask for his falcon,

The pleasure of his eyes—boast of his hand—

Pride of his heart—the solace of his hours—

His one companion here—nay, I have heard

That, thro' his late magnificence of living
And this last costly gift to mine own self,

[*Shows diamond necklace.*]

He hath become so beggar'd, that his falcon

Ev'n wins his dinner for him in the field.

That must be talk, not truth, but truth or talk,

How can I ask for his falcon?

[*Rises and moves as she speaks.*]

O my sick boy!

My daily fading Florio, it is thou

Hath set me this hard task, for when I say

What can I do—what can I get for thee?

He answers, 'Get the Count to give me his falcon,

And that will make me well.' Yet if I ask,

He loves me, and he knows I know he loves me!

Will he not pray me to return his love—
To marry him?—(*pause*)—I can never

marry him.

His grandsire struck my grandsire in a brawl

At Florence, and my grandsire stabb'd
him there.

The feud between our houses is the bar
I cannot cross; I dare not brave my
brother,

Break with my kin. My brother hates
him, scorns.

The noblest-natured man alive, and I—
Who have that reverence for him that I
scarce

Dare beg him to receive his diamonds
back—

How can I, dare I, ask him for his falcon?
[*Puts diamonds in her casket.*]

Re-enter COUNT and FILIPPO. COUNT
turns to FILIPPO

Count. Do what I said; I cannot do
it myself.

Filippo. Why then, my lord, we are
pauper'd out and out.

Count. Do what I said!

[*Advances and bows low.*]

Welcome to this poor cottage, my dear
lady.

Lady Giovanna. And welcome turns
a cottage to a palace.

Count. 'Tis long since we have met.

Lady Giovanna. To make amends
I come this day to break my fast with
you.

Count. I am much honour'd—yes—
[*Turns to Filippo.*]

Do what I told thee. Must I do it my-
self?

Filippo. I will, I will. (*Sighs.*) Poor
fellow! [*Exit.*]

Count. Lady, you bring your light
into my cottage

Who never deign'd to shine into my
palace.

My palace wanting you was but a cottage;
My cottage, while you grace it, is a palace.

Lady Giovanna. In cottage or in
palace, being still

Beyond your fortunes, you are still the
king

Of courtesy and liberality.

Count. I trust I still maintain my
courtesy;

My liberality perforce is dead.
Thro' lack of means of giving.

Lady Giovanna. Yet I come
To ask a gift.

[*Moves toward him a little.*]

Count. It will be hard, I fear,
To find one shock upon the field when all
The harvest has been carried.

Lady Giovanna. But my boy—
(*Aside.*) No, no! not yet—I cannot!

Count. Ay, how is he,
That bright inheritor of your eyes—your
boy?

Lady Giovanna. Alas, my Lord
Federigo, he hath fallen
Into a sickness, and it troubles me.

Count. Sick! is it so? why, when
he came last year

To see me hawking, he was well enough:
And then I taught him all our hawking-
phrases.

Lady Giovanna. Oh yes, and once
you let him fly your falcon.

Count. How charm'd he was! what
wonder?—A gallant boy,

A noble bird, each perfect of the breed.

Lady Giovanna (*sinks in chair*). What
do you rate her at?

Count. My bird? a hundred
Gold pieces once were offer'd by the
Duke.

I had no heart to part with her for money.

Lady Giovanna. No, not for money.

[*Count turns away and sighs.*]

Wherefore do you sigh?

Count. I have lost a friend of late.

Lady Giovanna. I could sigh with
you

For fear of losing more than friend, a
son;

And if he leave me—all the rest of life—
That wither'd wreath were of more worth
to me.

[*Looking at wreath on wall.*]

Count. That wither'd wreath is of
more worth to me
Than all the blossom, all the leaf of this
New-wakening year.

[*Goes and takes down wreath.*]

Lady Giovanna. And yet I never saw

The land so rich in blossom as this year.

Count (holding wreath toward her).

Was not the year when this was gather'd richer?

Lady Giovanna. How long ago was that?

Count. Alas, ten summers!

A lady that was beautiful as day

Sat by me at a rustic festival

With other beauties on a mountain meadow,

And she was the most beautiful of all;

Then but fifteen, and still as beautiful.

The mountain flowers grew thickly round about.

I made a wreath with some of these; I ask'd

A ribbon from her hair to bind it with;

I whisper'd, Let me crown you Queen of Beauty,

And softly placed the chaplet on her head.

A colour, which has colour'd all my life,
Flush'd in her face; then I was call'd away;

And presently all rose, and so departed.

Ah! she had thrown my chaplet on the grass,

And there I found it.

[*Lets his hands fall, holding wreath despondingly.*]

Lady Giovanna (after pause). How long since do you say?

Count. That was the very year before you married.

Lady Giovanna. When I was married you were at the wars.

Count. Had she not thrown my chaplet on the grass,

It may be I had never seen the wars.

[*Replaces wreath whence he had taken it.*]

Lady Giovanna. Ah, but, my lord, there ran a rumour then

That you were kill'd in battle. I can tell you

True tears that year were shed for you in Florence.

Count. It might have been as well for me. Unhappily

I was but wounded by the enemy there
And then imprison'd.

Lady Giovanna. Happily, however, I see you quite recover'd of your wound.

Count. No, no, not quite, Madonna, not yet, not yet.

Re-enter FILIPPO

Filippo. My lord, a word with you.

Count. Pray, pardon me!

[*Lady Giovanna crosses, and passes behind chair and takes down wreath; then goes to chair by table.*]

Count (to Filippo). What is it, Filippo?

Filippo. Spoons, your lordship.

Count. Spoons!

Filippo. Yes, my lord, for wasn't my lady born with a golden spoon in her ladyship's mouth, and we haven't never so much as a silver one for the golden lips of her ladyship.

Count. Have we not half a score of silver spoons?

Filippo. Half o' one, my lord!

Count. How half of one?

Filippo. I trod upon him even now, my lord, in my hurry, and broke him.

Count. And the other nine?

Filippo. Sold! but shall I not mount with your lordship's leave to her ladyship's castle, in your lordship's and her ladyship's name, and confer with her ladyship's seneschal, and so descend again with some of her ladyship's own appurtenances?

Count. Why—no, man. Only see your cloth be clean. [*Exit Filippo.*]

Lady Giovanna. Ay, ay, this faded ribbon was the mode

In Florence ten years back. What's here? a scroll

Pinned to the wreath.

My lord, you have said so much
Of this poor wreath that I was bold
enough

To take it down, if but to guess what
flowers

Had made it; and I find a written scroll

That seems to run in rhymings. Might
I read?

Count. Ay, if you will.

Lady Giovanna. It should be if you
can.

(*Reads.*) 'Dead mountain.' Nay, for
who could trace a hand

So wild and staggering!

Count. This was penn'd, Madonna,
Close to the grating on a winter morn

In the perpetual twilight of a prison,

When he that made it, having his right
hand

Lamed in the battle, wrote it with his
left.

Lady Giovanna. O heavens! the
very letters seem to shake

With cold, with pain perhaps, poor
prisoner! Well,

Tell me the words—or better—for I see
There goes a musical score along with
them,

Repeat them to their music.

Count. You can touch
No chord in me that would not answer you
In music.

Lady Giovanna. That is musically
said.

[*Count takes guitar. Lady Giovanna sits listening with wreath in her hand, and quietly removes scroll and places it on table at the end of the song.*

Count (sings, playing guitar). 'Dead
mountain flowers, dead mountain-
meadow flowers,

Dearer than when you made your moun-
tain gay,

Sweeter than any violet of to-day,

Richer than all the wide world-wealth of
May,

To me, tho' all your bloom has died
away,

You bloom again, dead mountain-meadow
flowers.'

Enter ELISABETTA with cloth

Elisabetta. A word with you, my
lord!

Count (singing). 'O mountain flowers!'

Elisabetta. A word, my lord!
(*Louder.*)

Count (sings). 'Dead flowers!'

Elisabetta. A word, my lord!
(*Louder.*)

Count. I pray you pardon me again!

[*Lady Giovanna looking at wreath.*

Count (to Elisabetta). What is it?

Elisabetta. My lord, we have but
one piece of earthenware to serve the
salad in to my lady, and that cracked!

Count. Why then, that flower'd bowl
my ancestor
Fetch'd from the farthest east—we never
use it

For fear of breakage—but this day has
brought

A great occasion. You can take it,
nurse!

Elisabetta. I did take it, my lord,
but what with my lady's coming that
had so flurried me, and what with the
fear of breaking it, I did break it, my
lord: it is broken!

Count. My one thing left of value is
the world!

No matter! see your cloth be white as
snow!

Elisabetta (pointing thro' window).
White? I warrant thee, my son, as the
snow yonder on the very tip-top o' the
mountain.

Count. And yet to speak white truth,
my good old mother,

I have seen it like the snow on the
moraine.

Elisabetta. How can your lordship
say so? There my lord!

[*Lays cloth.*

O my dear son, be not unkind to me.

And one word more. [*Going—returns.*

Count (touching guitar). Good! let
it be but one.

Elisabetta. Hath she return'd thy love?

Count. Not yet!

Elisabetta. And will she?

Count (looking at Lady Giovanna). I
scarce believe it!

Elisabetta. Shame upon her then!

[*Exit.*

Count (*sings*). 'Dead mountain flowers'—

Ah well, my nurse has broken
The thread of my dead flowers, as she
has broken

My china bowl. My memory is as dead.

[*Goes and replaces guitar.*
Strange that the words at home with me
so long

Should fly like bosom friends when needed
most.

So by your leave if you would hear the
rest,

The writing.

Lady Giovanna (*holding wreath toward
him*). There! my lord, you are
a poet,

And can you not imagine that the wreath,
Set, as you say, so lightly on her head,
Fell with her motion as she rose, and she,
A girl, a child, then but fifteen, however
Flutter'd or flatter'd by your notice of
her,

Was yet too bashful to return for it?

Count. Was it so indeed? was it so?
was it so?

[*Leans forward to take wreath, and
touches Lady Giovanna's hand, which
she withdraws hastily; he places
wreath on corner of chair.*

Lady Giovanna (*with dignity*). I did
not say, my lord, that it was so;
I said you might imagine it was so.

Enter FILIPPO with bowl of salad, which
he places on table

Filippo. Here's a fine salad for my
lady, for tho' we have been a soldier, and
ridden by his lordship's side, and seen the
red of the battle-field, yet are we now
drill-sergeant to his lordship's lettuces,
and profess to be great in green things
and in garden-stuff.

Lady Giovanna. I thank thee, good
Filippo. [*Exit Filippo.*

Enter ELISABETTA with bird on a dish
which she places on table

Elisabetta (*close to table*). Here's a
fine fowl for my lady; I had scant time to

do him in. I hope he be not underdone,
for we be undone in the doing of him.

Lady Giovanna. I thank you, my
good nurse.

Filippo (*re-entering with plate of prunes*).
And here are fine fruits for my lady—
prunes, my lady, from the tree that my
lord himself planted here in the blossom
of his boyhood—and so I, Filippo, being,
with your ladyship's pardon, and as your
ladyship knows, his lordship's own foster-
brother, would commend them to your
ladyship's most peculiar appreciation.

[*Puts plate on table.*

Elisabetta. Filippo!

Lady Giovanna (*Count leads her to
table*). Will you not eat with me,
my lord?

Count. I cannot,

Not a morsel, not one morsel. I have
broken

My fast already. I will pledge you.
Wine!

Filippo, wine!

[*Sits near table; Filippo brings flask,
fills the Count's goblet, then Lady
Giovanna's; Elisabetta stands at the
back of Lady Giovanna's chair.*

Count. It is but thin and cold,
Not like the vintage blowing round your
castle.

We lie too deep down in the shadow
here.

Your ladyship lives higher in the sun.

[*They pledge each other and drink.*

Lady Giovanna. If I might send you
down a flask or two

Of that same vintage? There is iron in it.
It has been much commended as a
medicine.

I give it my sick son, and if you be
Not quite recover'd of your wound, the
wine

Might help you. None has ever told me
yet

The story of your battle and your wound.

Filippo (*coming forward*). I can tell
you, my lady, I can tell you.

Elisabetta. Filippo! will you take the
word out of your master's own mouth?

Filippo. Was it there to take? Put it there, my lord.

Count. Giovanna, my dear lady, in this same battle
We had been beaten—they were ten to one.

The trumpets of the fight had echo'd down,

I and Filippo here had done our best,
And, having passed unwounded from the field,

Were seated sadly at a fountain side,
Our horses grazing by us, when a troop,
Laden with booty and with a flag of ours
Ta'en in the fight——

Filippo. Ay, but we fought for it back,
And kill'd——

Elisabetta. Filippo!

Count. A troop of horse——

Filippo. Five hundred!

Count. Say fifty!

Filippo. And we kill'd 'em by the score!

Elisabetta. Filippo!

Filippo. Well, well, well!

I bite my tongue.

Count. We may have left their fifty
less by five.

However, staying not to count how many,
But anger'd at their flaunting of our flag,
We mounted, and we dash'd into the
heart of 'em.

I wore the lady's chaplet round my neck;
It served me for a blessed rosary.

I am sure that more than one brave
fellow owed

His death to the charm in it.

Elisabetta. Hear that, my lady!

Count. I cannot tell how long we
strove before

Our horses fell beneath us; down we went
Crush'd, hack'd at, trampled underfoot.

The night,

As some cold-manner'd friend may
strangely do us

The truest service, had a touch of frost
That help'd to check the flowing of the
blood.

My last sight ere I swoon'd was one
sweet face

Crown'd with the wreath. *That seem'd*
to come and go.

They left us there for dead!

Elisabetta. Hear that, my lady!

Filippo. Ay, and I left two fingers
there for dead. See, my lady! (*Showing*
his hand.)

Lady Giovanna. I see, Filippo!

Filippo. And I have small hope of
the gentleman gout in my great toe.

Lady Giovanna. And why, Filippo?

[*Smiling absently.*]

Filippo. I left him there for dead too!

Elisabetta. She smiles at him—how
hard the woman is!

My lady, if your ladyship were not
Too proud to look upon the garland, you
Would find it stain'd——

Count (rising). Silence, Elisabetta!

Elisabetta. Stain'd with the blood of
the best heart that ever

Beat for one woman.

[*Points to wreath on chair.*]

Lady Giovanna (rising slowly). I can
eat no more!

Count. You have but trifled with our
homely salad,

But dallied with a single lettuce-leaf;
Not eaten anything.

Lady Giovanna. Nay, nay, I cannot.
You know, my lord, I told you I was
troubled.

My one child Florio lying still so sick,
I bound myself, and by a solemn vow,
That I would touch no flesh till he were
well

Here, or else well in Heaven, where all
is well.

[*Elisabetta clears table of bird and
salad: Filippo snatches up the plate
of prunes and holds them to Lady
Giovanna.*]

Filippo. But the prunes, my lady,
from the tree that his lordship——

Lady Giovanna. Not now, Filippo.

My lord Federigo,
Can I not speak with you once more
alone?

Count. You hear, Filippo? My good
fellow, go!

Filippo. But the prunes that your lordship—

Elisabetta. Filippo!

Count. Ay, prune our company of thine own and go!

Elisabetta. Filippo!

Filippo (turning). Well, well! the women! *[Exit.*

Count. And thou too leave us, my dear nurse, alone.

Elisabetta (folding up cloth and going). And me too! Ay, the dear nurse will leave you alone; but, for all that, she that has eaten the yolk is scarce like to swallow the shell.

[Turns and curtsies stiffly to Lady Giovanna, then exit. Lady Giovanna takes out diamond necklace from casket.

Lady Giovanna. I have anger'd your good nurse; these old-world servants

Are all but flesh and blood with those they serve.

My lord, I have a present to return you, And afterwards a boon to crave of you.

Count. No, my most honour'd and long-worshipt lady,

Poor Federigo degli Alberighi Takes nothing in return from you except Return of his affection—can deny Nothing to you that you require of him.

Lady Giovanna. Then I require you to take back your diamonds—

[Offering necklace.

I doubt not they are yours. No other heart

Of such magnificence in courtesy Beats—out of heaven. They seem'd too rich a prize

To trust with any messenger. I came In person to return them.

[Count draws back.

If the phrase

'Return' displease you, we will say—exchange them

For your—for your—

Count (takes a step toward her and then back). For mine—and what of mine?

Lady Giovanna. Well, shall we say this wreath and your sweet rhymes?

Count. But have you ever worn my diamonds?

Lady Giovanna. No!

For that would seem accepting of your love.

I cannot brave my brother—but be sure That I shall never marry again, my lord!

Count. Sure?

Lady Giovanna. Yes!

Count. Is this your brother's order?

Lady Giovanna. No!

For he would marry me to the richest man

In Florence; but I think you know the saying—

'Better a man without riches, than riches without a man.'

Count. A noble saying—and acted on would yield

A nobler breed of men and women.

Lady,

I find you a shrewd bargainer. The wreath

That once you wore outvalues twenty-fold

The diamonds that you never deign'd to wear.

But lay them there for a moment!

[Points to table. Lady Giovanna places necklace on table.

And be you

Gracious enough to let me know the boon

By granting which, if aught be mine to grant,

I should be made more happy than I hoped

Ever to be again.

Lady Giovanna. Then keep your wreath,

But you will find me a shrewd bargainer still.

I cannot keep your diamonds, for the gift

I ask for, to my mind and at this present Outvalues all the jewels upon earth.

Count. It should be love that thus outvalues all.

You speak like love, and yet you love
me not.

I have nothing in this world but love for
you.

Lady Giovanna. Love? it *is* love,
love for my dying boy,

Moves me to ask it of you.

Count. What? my time?

Is it my time? Well, I can give my
time

To him that is a part of you, your son.

Shall I return to the castle with you?
Shall I

Sit by him, read to him, tell him my
tales,

Sing him my songs? You know that I
can touch

The ghittern to some purpose.

Lady Giovanna. No, not that!

I thank you heartily for that—and
you,

I doubt not from your nobleness of
nature,

Will pardon me for asking what I ask.

Count. Giovanna, dear Giovanna, I
that once

The wildest of the random youth of
Florence

Before I saw you—all my nobleness

Of nature, as you deign to call it, draws

From you, and from my constancy to
you.

No more, but speak.

Lady Giovanna. I will. You know
sick people,

More specially sick children, have strange
fancies,

Strange longings; and to thwart them
in their mood

May work them grievous harm at times,
may even

Hasten their end. I would you had a
son!

It might be easier then for you to make
Allowance for a mother—her—who
comes

To rob you of your one delight on earth.
How often has my sick boy yearn'd for
this!

I have put him off as often; but to-day

I dared not—so much weaker, so much
worse

For last day's journey. I was weeping
for him;

He gave me his hand: 'I should be well
again

If the good Count would give me——'

Count. Give me.

Lady Giovanna. His falcon.

Count (starts back). My falcon!

Lady Giovanna. Yes, your falcon,
Federigo!

Count. Alas, I cannot!

Lady Giovanna. Cannot? Even so!
I fear'd as much. O this unhappy
world!

How shall I break it to him? how shall
I tell him?

The boy may die: more blessed were
the rags

Of some pale beggar-woman seeking
alms

For her sick son, if he were like to live,

Than all my childless wealth, if mine
must die.

I was to blame—the love you said you
bore me—

My lord, we thank you for your entertain-
ment. [*With a stately curtsey.*

And so return—Heaven help him!—to
our son. [*Turns.*

Count (rushes forward). Stay, stay,

I am most unlucky, most unhappy.

You never had look'd in on me before,

And when you came and dipt your
sovereign head

Thro' these low doors, you ask'd to eat
with me,

I had but emptiness to set before you,
No not a draught of milk, no not an

egg,

Nothing but my brave bird, my noble
falcon,

My comrade of the house, and of the
field.

She had to die for it—she died for you.

Perhaps I thought with those of old, the
nobler

The victim was, the more acceptable

Might be the sacrifice. I fear you scarce

Will thank me for your entertainment now.

Lady Giovanna (returning). I bear with him no longer.

Count. No, Madonna !
And he will have to bear with it as he may.

Lady Giovanna. I break with him for ever !

Count. Yes, Giovanna,
But he will keep his love to you for ever !

Lady Giovanna. You ? you ? not you ! My brother ! my hard brother !

O Federigo, Federigo, I love you !
Spite of ten thousand brothers, Federigo.

[Falls at his feet.]

Count (impetuously). Why then the dying of my noble bird
Hath served me better than her living—
then

[Takes diamonds from table.]

These diamonds are both yours and mine
—have won

Their value again—beyond all markets
—there

I lay them for the first time round your neck.

[Lays necklace round her neck.]

And then this chaplet—No more feuds,
but peace,

Peace and conciliation ! I will make
Your brother love me. See, I tear away
The leaves were darken'd by the battle—

[Pulls leaves off and throws them down.]

—crown you

Again with the same crown my Queen
of Beauty.

[Places wreath on her head.]

Rise—I could almost think that the
dead garland

Will break once more into the living
blossom.

Nay, nay, I pray you rise.

[Raises her with both hands.]

We two together

Will help to heal your son—your son
and mine—

We shall do it—we shall do it.

[Embraces her.]

The purpose of my being is accomplish'd,
And I am happy !

Lady Giovanna. And I too, Federigo.

THE PROMISE OF MAY

'A surface man of theories, true to none.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

FARMER DOBSON.

Mr. PHILIP EDGAR (*afterwards* Mr. HAROLD).

FARMER STEER (*DORA and EVA's Father*).

Mr. WILSON (*a Schoolmaster*).

HIGGINS

JAMES

DAN SMITH

JACKSON

ALLEN

DORA STEER.

EVA STEER.

SALLY ALLEN

MILLY

} *Farm Labourers.*

} *Farm Servants.*

Farm Servants, Labourers, etc.

ACT I

SCENE.—BEFORE FARMHOUSE

Farming Men and Women. Farming Men carrying forms, etc., Women carrying baskets of knives and forks, etc.

1st Farming Man. Be thou a-gawin' to the long barn?

2nd Farming Man. Ay, to be sewer! Be thou?

1st Farming Man. Why, o' coorse, fur it be the owd man's birthdaäy. He be heighty this very daäy, and 'e telled all on us to be i' the long barn by one o'clock, fur he'll gie us a big dinner, and haäfe th' parish 'll be theer, an' Miss Dora, an' Miss Eva, an' all!

2nd Farming Man. Miss Dora be coomed back, then?

1st Farming Man. Ay, haäfe an hour ago. She be in their now. (*Pointing to house.*) Owd Steer wur afeärd she wouldn't be back i' time to keep his birthdaäy, and he wur in a tew about it all the murnin'; and he sent me wi' the gig to Littlechester to fetch 'er; and 'er an' the owd man they fell a kissin' o' one

another like two sweet'arts i' the poorch as soon as he clapt eyes of 'er.

2nd Farming Man. Foälsks says he likes Miss Eva the best.

1st Farming Man. Naäy, I knaws nowt o' what foälsks says, an' I caäres nowt neither. Foälsks doesn't hallus know thessens; but sewer I be, they be two o' the purtiest gels ye can see of a summer murnin'.

2nd Farming Man. Beänt Miss Eva gone off a bit of 'er good looks o' laäte?

1st Farming Man. Noä, not a bit.

2nd Farming Man. Why coöm awaäy, then, to the long barn.

[*Exeunt.*]

DORA looks out of window. Enter DOBSON

Dora (singing)

The town lay still in the low sun-light,
The hen cluckt late by the white farm gate,
The maid to her dairy came in from the
cow,

The stock-dove coo'd at the fall of night,
The blossom had open'd on every bough;

O joy for the promise of May, of May,

O joy for the promise of May.

(*Nodding at Dobson.*) I'm coming down, Mr. Dobson. I haven't seen Eva yet. Is she anywhere in the garden?

Dobson. Noä, Miss. I ha'n't seed 'er neither.

Dora (enters singing)

But a red fire woke in the heart of the town,
And a fox from the glen ran away with
the hen,
And a cat to the cream, and a rat to the
cheese ;
And the stock-dove coo'd, till a kite dropt
down,
And a salt wind burnt the blossoming
trees ;

O grief for the promise of May, of May,
O grief for the promise of May.

I don't know why I sing that song ; I
don't love it.

Dobson. Blessings on your pretty
voice, Miss Dora. Wheer did they larn
ye that ?

Dora. In Cumberland, Mr. Dobson.

Dobson. An' how did ye leäve the
owd uncle i' Coomberland ?

Dora. Getting better, Mr. Dobson.
But he'll never be the same man again.

Dobson. An' how d'ye find the owd
man 'ere ?

Dora. As well as ever. I came back
to keep his birthday.

Dobson. Well, I be coomed to keep
his birthdaäy an' all. The owd man be
heighty to-daäy, beänt he ?

Dora. Yes, Mr. Dobson. And the
day's bright like a friend, but the wind
east like an enemy. Help me to move
this bench for him into the sun. (*They
move bench.*) No, not that way—here,
under the apple tree. Thank you.
Look how full of rosy blossom it is.

[*Pointing to apple tree.*]

Dobson. Theer be redder blossoms
nor them, Miss Dora.

Dora. Where do they blow, Mr.
Dobson ?

Dobson. Under your eyes, Miss Dora.

Dora. Do they ?

Dobson. And your eyes be as blue
as——

Dora. What, Mr. Dobson ? A
butcher's frock ?

Dobson. Noä, Miss Dora ; as blue
as——

Dora. Bluebell, harebell, speedwell,
bluebottle, succory, forget-me-not ?

Dobson. Noä, Miss Dora ; as blue
as——

Dora. The sky ? or the sea on a blue
day ?

Dobson. Naäy then. I meän'd they
be as blue as violets.

Dora. Are they ?

Dobson. Theer ye goäs ageän, Miss,
niver believing owt I says to ye—hallus
a-fobbing ma off, tho' ye knaws I love ye.
I warrants ye'll think moor o' this young
Squire Edgar as ha' coomed among us—
the Lord knaws how—ye'll think more
on 'is little finger than hall my hand at
the haltar.

Dora. Perhaps, Master Dobson. I
can't tell, for I have never seen him. But
my sister wrote that he was mighty
pleasant, and had no pride in him.

Dobson. He'll be arter you now, Miss
Dora.

Dora. Will he ? How can I tell ?

Dobson. He's been arter Miss Eva,
haän't he ?

Dora. Not that I know.

Dobson. Didn't I spy 'em a-sitting i'
the woodbine harbour together ?

Dora. What of that ? Eva told me
that he was taking her likeness. He's
an artist.

Dobson. What's a hartist ? I doänt
believe he's iver a 'eart under his waist-
coat. And I tells ye what, Miss Dora :
he's no respect for the Queen, or the
parson, or the justice o' peace, or owt.
I ha' heärd 'im a-gawin' on 'ud make
your 'air—God bless it !—stan' on end.
And wuss nor that. When theer wur a
meeting o' farmers at Littlechester t'other
daäy, and they was all a-crying out at the
bad times, he cooms up, and he calls
out among our oän men, 'The land
belongs to the people !'

Dora. And what did *you* say to that ?

Dobson. Well, I says, s'pose my pig's
the land, and you says it belongs to the

parish, and theer be a thousand i' the parish, taäkin' in the women and childer; and s'pose I kills my pig, and gi'es it among 'em, why there wudn't be a dinner for nawbody, and I should ha' lost the pig.

Dora. And what did he say to that?

Dobson. Nowt—what could he saäy? But I taäkes 'im fur a bad lot and a burn fool, and I haätes the very sight on him.

Dora (*looking at Dobson*). Master Dobson, you are a comely man to look at.

Dobson. I thank you for that, Miss Dora, onyhow.

Dora. Ay, but you turn right ugly when you're in an ill temper; and I promise you that if you forget yourself in your behaviour to this gentleman, my father's friend, I will never change word with you again.

Enter FARMING MAN from barn.

Farming Man. Miss, the farming men 'ull hev their dinner i' the long barn, and the master 'ud be straänge an' pleased if you'd step in fust, and see that all be right and reg'lar fur 'em afoor he coöm. [*Exit.*]

Dora. I go. Master Dobson, did you hear what I said?

Dobson. Yeas, yeas! I'll not meddle wi' 'im if he doänt meddle wi' meä. (*Exit Dora.*) Coomly, says she. I niver thowt o' mysen i' that waäy; but if she'd taäke to ma i' that waäy, or ony waäy, I'd slaäve out my life fur 'er. 'Coomly to look at,' says she—but she said it spiteful-like. To look at—yeas, 'coomly'; and she mayn't be so fur out theer. But if that be nowt to she, then it be nowt to me. (*Looking off stage.*) Schoolmaster! Why if Steer han't haxed schoolmaster to dinner, thaw 'e knaws I was hallus ageän heving schoolmaster i' the parish! fur him as be handy wi' a book bean't but haäfe a hand at a pitchfork.

Enter WILSON

Well, Wilson. I seed that one cow

o' thine i' the pinfold ageän as I wur a-coomin' 'ere.

Wilson. Very likely, Mr. Dobson. She *will* break fence. I can't keep her in order.

Dobson. An' if tha can't keep thy one cow i' horder, how can tha keep all thy scholars i' horder? But let that goä by. What dost a know o' this Mr. Hedgar as be a-lodgin' wi' ye? I coom'd upon 'im t'other daäy lookin' at the coontry, then a-scrattin' upon a bit o' paäper, then a-lookin' ageän; and I taäked 'im fur soom sort of a land-surveyor—but a beänt.

Wilson. He's a Somersetshire man, and a very civil-spoken gentleman.

Dobson. Gentleman! What be he a-doing here ten mile an' moor fro' a raäil? We laäys out o' the waäy fur gentlefoälk altogether—leästwaäys they niver cooms 'ere but fur the trout i' our beck, fur they be know'd as far as Littlechester. But 'e doänt fish neither.

Wilson. Well, it's no sin in a gentleman not to fish.

Dobson. Noä, but I haätes 'im.

Wilson. Better step out of his road, then, for he's walking to us, and with a book in his hand.

Dobson. An' I haätes booöks an' all, fur they puts foälk off the owd waäys.

Enter EDGAR, reading—not seeing DOBSON and WILSON

Edgar. This author, with his charm of simple style

And close dialectic, all but proving man
An automatic series of sensations,
Has often numb'd me into apathy
Against the unpleasant jolts of this rough road

That breaks off short into the abysses—
made me

A Quietist taking all things easily.

Dobson. (*Aside.*) There mun be summut wrong theer, Wilson, fur I doänt understan' it.

Wilson. (*Aside.*) Nor I either, Mr. Dobson.

Dobson (scornfully). An thou doänt understandan' it neither—and thou school-master an' all.

Edgar. What can a man, then, live for but sensations,
Pleasant ones? men of old would under-
go

Unpleasant for the sake of pleasant ones
Hereafter, like the Moslem beauties
waiting

To clasp their lovers by the golden gates.
For me, whose cheerless Houris after
death

Are Night and Silence, pleasant ones—
the while—

If possible, here! to crop the flower and
pass.

Dobson. Well, I never 'eärd the likes
o' that afoor.

Wilson. (Aside.) But I have, Mr.
Dobson. It's the old Scripture text,
'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we
die.' I'm sorry for it, for, tho' he never
comes to church, I thought better of him.

Edgar. 'What are we,' says the blind
old man in Lear?

'As flies to the Gods; they kill us for
their sport.'

Dobson. (Aside.) Then the owd man
i' Lear should be shaämed of hissen, but
noän o' the parishes goäs by that naäme
'ereabouts.

Edgar. The Gods! but they, the
shadows of ourselves,
Have past for ever. It is Nature kills,
And not for *her* sport either. She knows
nothing.

Man only knows, the worse for him! for
why

Cannot *he* take his pastime like the flies?
And if my pleasure breed another's pain,
Well—is not that the course of Nature
too,

From the dim dawn of Being—her main
law

Whereby she grows in beauty—that her
flies

Must massacre each other? this poor
Nature!

Dobson. Natur! Natur! Well, it

be i' *my* natur to knock 'im o' the 'eäd
now; but I weänt.

Edgar. A Quietist taking all things
easily—why—

Have I been dipping into this again
To steel myself against the leaving her?

[*Closes book, seeing Wilson.*]

Good day!

Wilson. Good day, sir.

[*Dobson looks hard at Edgar.*]

Edgar (to Dobson). Have I the
pleasure, friend, of knowing you?

Dobson. Dobson.

Edgar. Good day, then, Dobson.

[*Exit.*]

Dobson. 'Good daäy then, Dobson!'
Civil-spoken i'deed! Why, Wilson, tha
'eärd 'im thysen—the feller couldn't find
a Mister in his mouth fur me, as farms
five hoonderd haäcre.

Wilson. You never find one for me,
Mr. Dobson.

Dobson. Noä, fur thou be nobbut
schoolmaster; but I taäkes 'im for a
Lunnun swindler, and a burn fool.

Wilson. He can hardly be both, and
he pays me regular every Saturday.

Dobson. Yeas; but I haätes 'im.

Enter STEER, FARM MEN and WOMEN

Steer (goes and sits under apple tree).
Hev' ony o' ye seen Eva?

Dobson. Noä, Mr. Steer.

Steer. Well, I reckons they'll hev' a
fine cider-crop to-year if the blossom
'owds. Good murnin', neighbours, and
the saäme to you, my men. I taäkes it
kindly of all o' you that you be coomed
—what's the newspaäper word, Wilson?
—celebrate—to celebrate my birthdaäy
i' this fashion. Niver man 'ed better
friends, and I will saäy niver master 'ed
better men: fur thaw I may ha' fallen out
wi' ye sometimes, the fault, mebbe, wur
as much mine as yours; and, thaw I says
it mysen, niver men 'ed a better master—
and I knaws what men be, and what
masters be, fur I wur nobbut a laäbourer,
and now I be a landlord—burn a plow-
man, and now, as far as money goäs, I be a

gentleman, thaw I beänt naw scholard, fur I 'ednt naw time to maäke mysen a scholard while I wur maäkin' mysen a gentleman, but I ha taäen good care to turn out boäth my darters right down fine laädies.

Dobson. An' soä they be.

1st Farming Man. Soä they be ! soä they be !

2nd Farming Man. The Lord bless boäth on 'em !

3rd Farming Man. An' the saäme to you, Master.

4th Farming Man. And long life to boäth on 'em. An' the saäme to you, Master Steer, likewise.

Steer. Thank ye !

Enter EVA

Wheer 'asta been ?

Eva (timidly). Many happy returns of the day, father.

Steer. They can't be many, my dear, but I 'oäpes they'll be 'appy.

Dobson. Why, tha looks haäle anew to last to a hoonderd.

Steer. An' why shouldn't I last to a hoonderd ? Haäle ! why shouldn't I be haäle ? fur thaw I be heighty this very daäy, I niver 'es sa much as one pin's prick of paäin ; an' I can taäke my glass along wi' the youngest, fur I niver touched a drop of owt till my oän wedding-daäy, an' then I wur turned huppads o' sixty. Why shouldn't I be haäle ? I ha' plowed the ten-aäcre—it be mine now—afor ony o' ye wur burn—ye all knaws the ten-aäcre—I mun ha' plowed it moor nor a hoonderd times ; hallus hup at sunrise, and I'd drive the plow straight as a line right i' the faäce o' the sun, then back ageän, a-follering my oän shadder—then hup ageän i' the faäce o' the sun. Eh ! how the sun 'ud shine, and the larks 'ud sing i' them daäys, and the smell o' the mou'd an' all. Eh ! if I could ha' gone on wi' the plowin' nobbut the smell o' the mou'd 'ud ha' maäde ma live as long as Jerusalem.

Eva. Methusaleh, father.

Steer. Ay, lass, but when thou be as owd as me thou'll put one word fur another as I does.

Dobson. But, Steer, thaw thou be haäle anew I seed tha a-limpin' up just now wi' the roomatics i' the knee.

Steer. Roomatics ! Noä ; I laäme't my knee last night running arter a thief. Beänt there house-breakers down i' Littlechester, Dobson—doänt ye hear of ony ?

Dobson. Ay, that there be. Immanuel Goldsmiths was broke into o' Monday night, and ower a hoonderd pounds worth o' rings stolen.

Steer. So I thowt, and I heärd the winder—that's the winder at the end o' the passage, that goäs by thy chaumber. (*Turning to Eva.*) Why, lass, what maäkes tha sa red ? Did 'e git into thy chaumber ?

Eva. Father !

Steer. Well, I runned arter thief i' the dark, and fell ageän coalscuttle and my kneä gev waäy or I'd ha' cotched 'im, but afor I coomed up he got thruff the winder ageän.

Eva. Got thro' the window again ?

Steer. Ay, but he left the mark of 'is foot i' the flower-bed ; now theer be noän o' my men, thinks I to mysen, 'ud ha' done it 'cep' it were Dan Smith, fur I cotched 'im once a-steälin' coäls, an' I sent fur 'im, an' I measured his foot wi' the mark i' the bed, but it wouldn't fit—seeäms to me the mark wur maäde by a Lunnun boot. (*Looks at Eva.*) Why, now, what maäkes tha sa white ?

Eva. Fright, father !

Steer. Maäke thysen eäsy. I'll hev the winder naäiled up, and put Towser under it.

Eva (clasping her hands). No, no, father ! Towser'll tear him all to pieces.

Steer. Let him keep awaäy, then ; but coom, coom ! let's be gawin. They ha' broached a barrel of aäle i' the long barn, and the fiddler be theer, and the lads and lasses 'ull hev a dance.

Eva. (Aside.) Dance ! small heart

have I to dance. I should seem to be dancing upon a grave.

Steer. Wheer be Mr. Edgar? about the premises?

Dobson. Hallus about the premises!

Steer. So much the better, so much the better. I likes 'im, and Eva likes 'im. Eva can do owt wi' 'im; look for 'im, Eva, and bring 'im to the barn. He 'ant naw pride in 'im, and we'll git 'im to speechify for us arter dinner.

Eva. Yes, father! [*Exit.*

Steer. Coom along then, all the rest o' ye! Churchwarden be a coomin, thaw me and 'im we niver 'grees about the tithe; and Parson mebbe, thaw he niver mended that gap i' the glebe fence as I telled 'im; and Blacksmith, thaw he niver shoes a herse to my likings; and Baäker, thaw I sticks to hoäm-maäde—but all on 'em welcome, all on 'em welcome; and I've hed the long barn cleared out of all the machines, and the sacks, and the taäters, and the mangles, and theer'll be room anew for all o' ye. Foller me.

All. Yeas, yeas! Three cheers for Mr. Steer!

[*All exeunt except Dobson into barn.*

Enter EDGAR

Dobson (who is going, turns). Squire!—if so be you be a squire.

Edgar. Dobbins, I think.

Dobson. Dobbins, you thinks; and I thinks ye weärs a Lunnun boot.

Edgar. Well?

Dobson. And I thinks I'd like to taäke the measure o' your foot.

Edgar. Ay, if you'd like to measure your own length upon the grass.

Dobson. Coom, coom, that's a good un. Why, I could throw four o' ye; but I promised one of the Misses I wouldn't meddle wi' ye, and I weänt.

[*Exit into barn.*

Edgar. Jealous of me with Eva!

Is it so?

Well, tho' I grudge the pretty jewel, that I Have worn, to such a clod, yet that might be

The best way out of it, if the child could keep

Her counsel. I am sure I wish her happy.

But I must free myself from this entanglement.

I have all my life before me—so has she—

Give her a month or two, and her affections

Will flower toward the light in some new face.

Still I am half-afraid to meet her now.

She will urge marriage on me. I hate tears.

Marriage is but an old tradition. I hate Traditions, ever since my narrow father, After my frolic with his tenant's girl, Made younger elder son, violated the whole

Tradition of our land, and left his heir, Born, happily, with some sense of art, to live

By brush and pencil. By and by, when Thought

Comes down among the crowd, and man perceives that

The lost gleam of an after-life but leaves him

A beast of prey in the dark, why then the crowd

May wreak my wrongs upon my wrongers. Marriage!

That fine, fat, hook-nosed uncle of mine, old Harold,

Who leaves me all his land at Littlechester,

He, too, would oust me from his will, if I

Made such a marriage. And marriage in itself—

The storm is hard at hand will sweep away

Thrones, churches, ranks, traditions, customs, marriage

One of the feeblest! Then the man, the woman,

Following their best affinities, will each Bid their old bond farewell with smiles, not tears;

Good wishes, not reproaches ; with no
fear
Of the world's gossiping clamour, and
no need
Of veiling their desires.

Conventionalism,
Who shrieks by day at what she does by
night,
Would call this vice ; but one time's vice
may be
The virtue of another ; and Vice and
Virtue
Are but two masks of self ; and what
hereafter
Shall mark out Vice from Virtue in the
gulf
Of never-dawning darkness ?

Enter EVA

My sweet Eva,
Where have you lain in ambush all the
morning ?
They say your sister, Dora, has return'd,
And that should make you happy, if you
love her !
But you look troubled.

Eva. Oh, I love her so,
I was afraid of her, and I hid myself,
We never kept a secret from each other ;
She would have seen at once into my
trouble,

And ask'd me what I could not answer.
Oh, Philip,
Father heard you last night. Our savage
mastiff,

That all but kill'd the beggar, will be
placed
Beneath the window, Philip.

Edgar. Savage, is he ?
What matters ? Come, give me your
hand and kiss me

This beautiful May-morning.
Eva. The most beautiful
May we have had for many years !

Edgar. And here
Is the most beautiful morning of this
May.

Nay, you must smile upon me ! There
—you make
The May and morning still more beautiful,

You, the most beautiful blossom of the
May.

Eva. Dear Philip, all the world is
beautiful

If we were happy, and could chime in
with it.

Edgar. True ; for the senses, love,
are for the world ;

That for the senses.

Eva. Yes.

Edgar. And when the man,
The child of evolution, flings aside
His swaddling-bands, the morals of the
tribe,

He, following his own instincts as his
God,

Will enter on the larger golden age ;
No pleasure then taboo'd : for when the
tide

Of full democracy has overwhelm'd
This Old world, from that flood will rise
the New,

Like the Love-goddess, with no bridal
veil,

Ring, trinket of the Church, but naked
Nature

In all her loveliness.

Eva. What are you saying ?

Edgar. That, if we did not strain to
make ourselves
Better and higher than Nature, we might
be

As happy as the bees there at their honey
In these sweet blossoms.

Eva. Yes ; how sweet they smell !

Edgar. There ! let me break some
off for you.

[*Breaking branch off.*

Eva. My thanks.

But, look, how wasteful of the blossom
you are !

One, two, three, four, five, six—you have
robb'd poor father

Of ten good apples. Oh, I forgot to tell
you

He wishes you to dine along with us,
And speak for him after—you that are
so clever !

Edgar. I grieve I cannot ; but, in-
deed—

Eva. What is it?

Edgar. Well, business. I must leave you, love, to-day.

Eva. Leave me, to-day! And when will you return?

Edgar. I cannot tell precisely; but——

Eva. But what?

Edgar. I trust, my dear, we shall be always friends.

Eva. After all that has gone between us—friends!

What, only friends? [*Drops branch.*

Edgar. All that has gone between us

Should surely make us friends.

Eva. But keep us lovers.

Edgar. Child, do you love me now?

Eva. Yes, now and ever.

Edgar. Then you should wish us both to love for ever.

But, if you *will* bind love to one for ever, Altho' at first he take his bonds for flowers,

As years go on, he feels them press upon him,

Begins to flutter in them, and at last Breaks thro' them, and so flies away for ever;

While, had you left him free use of his wings,

Who knows that he had ever dream'd of flying?

Eva. But all that sounds so wicked and so strange;

'Till death us part?—those are the only words,

The true ones—nay, and those not true enough,

For they that love do not believe that death

Will part them. Why do you jest with me, and try

To fright me? Tho' you are a gentleman,

I but a farmer's daughter——

Edgar. Tut! you talk

Old feudalism. When the great Democracy

Makes a new world——

Eva. And if you be not jesting, Neither the old world, nor the new, nor father,

Sister, nor you, shall ever see me more.

Edgar (*moved*). Then—(*aside*) Shall I say it?—(*aloud*) fly with me to-day.

Eva. No! Philip, Philip, if you do not marry me,

I shall go mad for utter shame and die.

Edgar. Then, if we needs must be conventional,

When shall your parish-parson bawl our banns

Before your gaping clowns?

Eva. Not in our church— I think I scarce could hold my head up there.

Is there no other way?

Edgar. Yes, if you cared To fee an over-opulent superstition, Then they would grant you what they call a licence

To marry. Do you wish it?

Eva. Do I wish it?

Edgar. In London.

Eva. You will write to me?

Edgar. I will.

Eva. And I will fly to you thro' the night, the storm—

Yes, tho' the fire should run along the ground,

As once it did in Egypt. Oh, you see, I was just out of school, I had no mother—

My sister far away—and you, a gentleman,

Told me to trust you: yes, in every-thing—

That was the only *true* love; and I trusted—

Oh, yes, indeed, I would have died for you.

How could you—Oh, how could you?—nay, how could I?

But now you will set all right again, and I

Shall not be made the laughter of the village,

And poor old father not die miserable.

Dora (singing in the distance).

O joy for the promise of May, of May,

O joy for the promise of May.

Edgar. Speak not so loudly; that must be your sister.

You never told her, then, of what has past
Between us.

Eva. Never!

Edgar. Do not till I bid you.

Eva. No, Philip, no. [*Turns away.*]

Edgar (moved). How gracefully there she stands

Weeping—the little Niobe! What! we prize

The statue or the picture all the more
When we have made them ours! Is she less loveable,

Less lovely, being wholly mine? To stay—

Follow my art among these quiet fields,
Live with these honest folk——

And play the fool!

No! she that gave herself to me so easily
Will yield herself as easily to another.

Eva. Did you speak, Philip?

Edgar. Nothing more, farewell.

[*They embrace.*]

Dora (coming nearer).

O grief for the promise of May, of May,

O grief for the promise of May.

Edgar (still embracing her). Keep up your heart until we meet again.

Eva. If that should break before we meet again?

Edgar. Break! nay, but call for Philip when you will,

And he returns.

Eva. Heaven hears you, Philip
Edgar!

Edgar (moved). And he would hear you even from the grave.

Heaven curse him if he come not at your call!
[*Exit.*]

Enter DORA

Dora. Well, Eva!

Eva. Oh, Dora, Dora, how long you

have been away from home! Oh, how often I have wished for you! It seemed to me that we were parted for ever.

Dora. For ever, you foolish child! What's come over you? We parted like the brook yonder about the alder island, to come together again in a moment and to go on together again, till one of us be married. But where is this Mr. Edgar whom you praised so in your first letters? You haven't even mentioned him in your last?

Eva. He has gone to London.

Dora. Ay, child; and you look thin and pale. Is it for his absence? Have you fancied yourself in love with him? That's all nonsense, you know, such a baby as you are. But you shall tell me all about it.

Eva. Not now—presently. Yes, I have been in trouble, but I am happy—I think, quite happy now.

Dora (taking Eva's hand). Come, then, and make them happy in the long barn, for father is in his glory, and there is a piece of beef like a house-side, and a plum-pudding as big as the round haystack. But see they are coming out for the dance already. Well, my child, let us join them.

Enter all from barn laughing. EVA sits reluctantly under apple tree. STEER enters smoking, sits by EVA.

Dance.

ACT II

Five years have elapsed between Acts I. and II.

SCENE.—A MEADOW. ON ONE SIDE A PATHWAY GOING OVER A RUSTIC BRIDGE. AT BACK THE FARMHOUSE AMONG TREES. IN THE DISTANCE A CHURCH SPIRE

DOBSON and DORA

Dobson. So the owd uncle i' Coomberland be dead, Miss Dora, beänt he?

Dora. Yes, Mr. Dobson, I've been attending on his deathbed and his burial.

Dobson. It be five year sin' ye went afoor to him, and it seems to me nobbut t'other day. Hesn't he left ye nowt?

Dora. No, Mr. Dobson.

Dobson. But he were mighty fond o' ye, warn't he?

Dora. Fonder of poor Eva—like everybody else.

Dobson (*handing Dora basket of roses*). Not like me, Miss Dora; and I ha' browt these roses to ye—I forgits what they calls 'em, but I hallus gi'ed soom on 'em to Miss Eva at this time o' year. Will ya taäke 'em? fur Miss Eva, she set the bush by my dairy winder afoor she went to school at Littlechester—so I allus browt soom on 'em to her; and now she be gone, will ye taäke 'em, Miss Dora?

Dora. I thank you. They tell me that yesterday you mentioned her name too suddenly before my father. See that you do not do so again!

Dobson. Noä; I knaws a deäl better now. I seed how the owd man wur vext.

Dora. I take them, then, for Eva's sake.

[*Takes basket, places some in her dress.*]

Dobson. Eva's saäke. Yeas. Poor gel, poor gel! I can't abeär to think on 'er now, fur I'd ha' done owt fur 'er mysen; an' ony o' Steer's men, an' ony o' my men 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, an' all the parish 'ud ha' done owt fur 'er, fur we was all on us proud on 'er, an' them theer be soom of her oän roses, an' she wur as sweet as ony on 'em—the Lord bless 'er—'er oän sen; an' weänt ye taäke 'em now, Miss Dora, fur 'er saäke an' fur my saäke an' all?

Dora. Do you want them back again?

Dobson. Noä, noä! Keep 'em. But I hed a word to sääy to ye.

Dora. Why, Farmer, you should be in the hayfield looking after your men; you couldn't have more splendid weather.

Dobson. I be a going theer; but I thowt I'd bring tha them roses fust. The

weather's well anew, but the glass be a bit shaäky. S'iver we've led moäst on it.

Dora. Ay! but you must not be too sudden with it either, as you were last year, when you put it in green, and your stack caught fire.

Dobson. I were insured, Miss, an' I lost nowt by it. But I weänt be too sudden wi' it; and I feel sewer, Miss Dora, that I ha' been noän too sudden wi' you, fur I ha' sarved for ye well nigh as long as the man sarved for 'is sweet'art i' Scriptur'. Weänt ye gi'e me a kind answer at last?

Dora. I have no thought of marriage, my friend. We have been in such grief these five years, not only on my sister's account, but the ill success of the farm, and the debts, and my father's breaking down, and his blindness. How could I think of leaving him?

Dobson. Eh, but I be well to do; and if ye would nobbut hev me, I would taäke the owd blind man to my oän fire-side. You should hev him allus wi' ye.

Dora. You are generous, but it cannot be. I cannot love you; nay, I think I never can be brought to love any man. It seems to me that I hate men, ever since my sister left us. Oh, see here. (*Pulls out a letter.*) I wear it next my heart. Poor sister, I had it five years ago. 'Dearest Dora,—I have lost myself, and am lost for ever to you and my poor father. I thought Mr. Edgar the best of men, and he has proved himself the worst. Seek not for me, or you may find me at the bottom of the river.—EVA.'

Dobson. Be that my fault?

Dora. No; but how should I, with this grief still at my heart, take to the milking of your cows, the fatting of your calves, the making of your butter, and the managing of your poultry?

Dobson. Naäy, but I hev an owd woman as 'ud see to all that; and you should sit i' your oän parlour quite like a laädy, ye should!

Dora. It cannot be.

Dobson. And plaäy the pianner, if ye

liked, all daäy long, like a laädy, ye should an' all.

Dora. It cannot be.

Dobson. And I would loove tha moor nor ony gentleman 'ud loove tha.

Dora. No, no; it cannot be.

Dobson. And p'raps ye hears 'at I soomtimes taäkes a drop too much; but that be all along o' you, Miss, because ye weänt hev me; but, if ye would, I could put all that o' one side eäsy anew.

Dora. Cannot you understand plain words, Mr. Dobson? I tell you, it cannot be.

Dobson. Eh, lass! Thy feyther eddicated his darters to marry gentleföälk, and see what's coomed on it.

Dora. That is enough, Farmer Dobson. You have shown me that, though fortune have born you into the estate of a gentleman, you would still have been Farmer Dobson. You had better attend to your hayfield. Good afternoon.

[*Exit.*

Dobson. 'Farmer Dobson!' Well, I be Farmer Dobson; but I thinks Farmer Dobson's dog 'ud ha' know'd better nor to cast her sister's misfortin inter 'er teeth arter she'd been a-readin' me the letter wi' 'er voice a-shaäkin', and the drop in 'er eye. Theer she goäs! Shall I foller 'er and ax 'er to maäke it up? Noä, not yet. Let 'er cool upon it; I likes 'er all the better fur taäkin' me down, like a laädy, as she be. Farmer Dobson! I be Farmer Dobson, sewer anew; but if iver I cooms upo' Gentleman Hedgar ageän, and doänt lääy my cartwhip athurt 'is shou'ders, why then I beänt Farmer Dobson, but summun else—blaäme't if I beänt!

Enter HAYMAKERS with a load of hay

The last on it, eh?

1st Haymaker. Yeas.

Dobson. Hoäm wi' it, then.

[*Exit surlily.*

1st Haymaker. Well, it be the last löä hoäm.

2nd Haymaker. Yeas, an' owd Dobson

should be glad on it. What maäkes 'im allus sa glum?

Sally Allen. Glum! he be wuss noi glum. He coom'd up to me yisterdaäy i' the haäyfield, when meä and my sweet'art was a workin' along o' one side wi' one another, and he sent 'im awaäy to t'other end o' the field; and when I axed 'im why, he telled me 'at sweet'arts niver worked well together; and I telled 'im 'at sweet'arts allus worked best together; and then he called me a rude naäme, and I can't abide 'im.

James. Why, lass, doänt tha know he be sweet upo' Dora Steer, and she weänt sa much as look at 'im? And wheniver 'e sees two sweet'arts together like thou and me, Sally, he be fit to bust hissen wi' spites and jealousies.

Sally. Let 'im bust hissen, then, for owt I cares.

1st Haymaker. Well but, as I said afoor, it be the last löä hoäm; do thou and thy sweet'art sing us hoäm to supper—'The Last Löä Hoäm.'

All. Ay! 'The Last Löä Hoäm.'

Song

What did ye do, and what did ye saäy,
Wi' the wild white rose, an' the wood-
bine sa graäy,

An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky
sa blue—

What did ye saäy, and what did ye do,
When ye thowt there were nawbody
watchin' o' you,

And you an' your Sally was forkin' the
haäy,

At the end of the daäy,
For the last löä hoäm?

What did we do, and what did we saäy,
Wi' the briar sa green, an' the willer sa
graäy,

An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky
sa blue—

Do ye think I be gawin' to tell it to you,
What we mowt saäy, and what we mowt do,
When me an' my Sally was forkin' the
haäy,

At the end of the daäy,
For the last loäd hoäm?

But what did ye saäy, and what did ye
do,

Wi' the butterflies out, and the swallers
at plaäy,

An' the midders all mow'd, an' the sky
sa blue?

Why, coom then, owd feller, I'll tell it to
you;

For me an' my Sally we sweär'd to be
true,

To be true to each other, let 'appen what
maäy,

Till the end of the daäy
And the last loäd hoäm.

All. Well sung!

James. Fanny be the naäme i' the
song, but I swopt it fur *she*.

[*Pointing to Sally.*]

Sally. Let ma aloän afor foälk, wilt
tha?

Ist Haymaker. Ye shall sing that
ageän to-night, fur owd Dobson 'll gi'e us
a bit o' supper.

Sally. I weänt goä to owd Dobson;
he wur rude to me i' tha haäyfield, and
he'll be rude to me ageän to-night. Owd
Steer's gotten all his grass down and
wants a hand, and I'll goä to him.

Ist Haymaker. Owd Steer gi'es
nubbut cowl tea to 'is men, and owd
Dobson gi'es beer.

Sally. But I'd like owd Steer's cowl
tea better nor Dobson's beer. Good-bye.

[*Going.*]

James. Gi'e us a buss fust, lass.

Sally. I tell'd tha to let ma aloän!

James. Why, wasn't thou and me
a-bussin' o' one another t'other side o'
the haäycock, when owd Dobson coom'd
upo' us? I can't let tha aloän if I
would, Sally. [*Offering to kiss her.*]

Sally. Git along wi' ye, do! [*Exit.*]

[*All laugh; exeunt singing.*]

'To be true to each other, let 'appen
what maäy,

Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm.'

Enter HAROLD

Harold. Not Harold! 'Philip Edgar,
Philip Edgar!'

Her phantom call'd me by the name she
loved.

I told her I should hear her from the
grave.

Ay! yonder is her casement. I re-
member

Her bright face beaming starlike down
upon me

Thro' that rich cloud of blossom. Since
I left her

Here weeping, I have ranged the world,
and sat

Thro' every sensual course of that full
feast

That leaves but emptiness.

Song

'To be true to each other, let 'appen
what maäy,
To the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm.'

Harold. Poor Eva! O my God, if
man be only

A willy-nilly current of sensations—

Reaction needs must follow revel—yet—
Why feel remorse, he, knowing that he

must have

Moved in the iron grooves of Destiny?

Remorse then is a part of Destiny,

Nature a liar, making us feel guilty

Of her own faults.

My grandfather—of him
They say, that women—

O this mortal house,
Which we are born into, is haunted by

The ghosts of the dead passions of dead
men;

And these take flesh again with our own
flesh,

And bring us to confusion.

He was only
A poor philosopher who call'd the mind
Of children a blank page, a *tabula rasa*.
There, there, is written in invisible inks
'Lust, Prodigality, Covetousness, Craft,

Cowardice, Murder'—and the heat and
fire
Of life will bring them out, and black
enough,
So the child grow to manhood: better
death
With our first wail than life—

Song (further off)

'Till the end o' the daäy
An' the last loäd hoäm,
Loäd hoäm.'

This bridge again! (*Steps on the bridge.*)

How often have I stood
With Eva here! The brook among its
flowers!

Forget-me-not, meadowsweet, willow-
herb.

I had some smattering of science then,
Taught her the learned names, anatomized
The flowers for her—and now I only wish
This pool were deep enough, that I
might plunge
And lose myself for ever.

Enter DAN SMITH (singing)

Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to goä
Thruf slush an' squad
When roäds was bad,
But hallus 'ud stop at the Vine-an'-the-
Hop,

Fur boäth on 'em knawed as well as
mysen

That beer be as good fur 'erses as
men.

Gee oop! whoä! Gee oop! whoä!
Scizzars an' Pumpy was good uns to
goä.

The beer's gotten oop into my 'eäd.
S'iver I mun git along back to the farm,
fur she tell'd ma to taäke the cart to
Littlechester.

Enter DORA

Half an hour late! why are you loiter-
ing here? Away with you at once.

[*Exit Dan Smith.*]

(*Seeing Harold on bridge*)

Some madman, is it,
Gesticulating there upon the bridge?
I am half afraid to pass.

Harold. Sometimes I wonder,
When man has surely learnt at last that
all

His old-world faith, the blossom of his
youth,
Has faded, falling fruitless—whether then
All of us, all at once, may not be seized
With some fierce passion, not so much
for Death

As against Life! all, all, into the dark—
No more!—and science now could drug
and balm us

Back into nescience with as little pain
As it is to fall asleep.

This beggarly life,
This poor, flat, hedged-in field—no dis-
tance—this

Hollow Pandora-box,
With all the pleasures flown, not even
Hope

Left at the bottom!

Superstitious fool,
What brought me here? To see her
grave? her ghost?

Her ghost is everyway about me here.

Dora (coming forward). Allow me,
sir, to pass you.

Harold. Eva!

Dora. Eva!

Harold. What are you? Where do
you come from?

Dora. From the farm
Here, close at hand.

Harold. Are you—you are—that
Dora,

The sister. I have heard of you. The
likeness

Is very striking.

Dora. You knew Eva, then?

Harold. Yes—I was thinking of her
when—O yes,

Many years back, and never since have
met

Her equal for pure innocence of nature,
And loveliness of feature.

Dora.

No, nor I.

Harold. Except, indeed, I have found it once again
In your own self.

Dora. You flatter me. Dear Eva
Was always thought the prettier.

Harold. And *her* charm
Of voice is also yours ; and I was brood-
ing

Upon a great unhappiness when you
spoke.

Dora. Indeed, you seem'd in trouble,
sir.

Harold. And you
Seem my good angel who may help me
from it.

Dora (aside). How worn he looks,
poor man ! who is it, I wonder.
How can I help him ? (*Aloud.*) Might
I ask your name ?

Harold. Harold.

Dora. I never heard her mention you.

Harold. I met her first at a farm in
Cumberland—

Her uncle's.

Dora. She was there six years ago.

Harold. And if she never mention'd
me, perhaps

The painful circumstances which I heard—
I will not vex you by repeating them—
Only last week at Littlechester, drove me
From out her memory. She has dis-
appear'd,

They told me, from the farm—and
darker news.

Dora. She has disappear'd, poor
darling, from the world—

Left but one dreadful line to say, that we
Should find her in the river ; and we
dragg'd

The Littlechester river all in vain :
Have sorrow'd for her all these years in
vain.

And my poor father, utterly broken down
By losing her—she was his favourite
child—

Has let his farm, all his affairs, I fear,
But for the slender help that I can give,
Fall into ruin. Ah ! that villain, Edgar,
If he should ever show his face among
us,

Our men and boys would hoot him, stone
him, hunt him

With pitchforks off the farm, for all of
them

Loved her, and she was worthy of all
love.

Harold. They say, we should forgive
our enemies.

Dora. Ay, if the wretch were dead I
might forgive him ;

We know not whether he be dead or
living.

Harold. What Edgar ?

Dora. Philip Edgar of Toft Hall
In Somerset. Perhaps you know him ?

Harold. Slightly.

(*Aside.*) Ay, for how slightly have I
known myself.

Dora. This Edgar, then, is living ?

Harold. Living ? well—

One Philip Edgar of Toft Hall in Som-
erset

Is lately dead.

Dora. Dead !—is there more than
one ?

Harold. Nay—now—not one, (*aside*)
for I am Philip Harold.

Dora. That one, is he then—dead !

Harold. (*Aside.*) My father's death,
Let her believe it mine ; this, for the
moment,

Will leave me a free field.

Dora. Dead ! and this world
Is brighter for his absence as that other
Is darker for his presence.

Harold. Is not this

To speak too pitilessly of the dead ?

Dora. My five-years' anger cannot
die at once,

Not all at once with death and him. I
trust

I shall forgive him—by-and-by—not
now.

O sir, you seem to have a heart ; if you
Had seen us that wild morning when we
found

Her bed unslept in, storm and shower
lashing

Her casement, her poor spaniel wailing
for her,

That desolate letter, blotted with her
tears,
Which told us we should never see her
more—

Our old nurse crying as if for her own
child,

My father stricken with his first paralysis,
And then with blindness—had you been
one of us

And seen all this, then you would know
it is not

So easy to forgive—even the dead.

Harold. But sure am I that of your
gentleness

You will forgive him. She, you mourn
for, seem'd

A miracle of gentleness—would not blur
A moth's wing by the touching; would
not crush

The fly that drew her blood; and, were
she living,

Would not—if penitent—have denied
him *her*

Forgiveness. And perhaps the man
himself,

When hearing of that piteous death, has
suffer'd

More than we know. But wherefore
waste your heart

In looking on a chill and changeless Past?
Iron will fuse, and marble melt; the Past
Remains the Past. But you are young,
and—pardon me—

As lovely as your sister. Who can tell
What golden hours, with what full
hands, may be

Waiting you in the distance? Might I
call

Upon your father—I have seen the
world—

And cheer his blindness with a traveller's
tales?

Dora. Call if you will, and when you
will. I cannot

Well answer for my father; but if you
Can tell me anything of our sweet Eva
When in her brighter girlhood, I at least
Will bid you welcome, and will listen to
you.

Now I must go.

Harold. But give me first your hand :
I do not dare, like an old friend, to
shake it.

I kiss it as a prelude to that privilege
When you shall know me better.

Dora. (*Aside.*) How beautiful
His manners are, and how unlike the
farmer's !

You are staying here?

Harold. Yes, at the wayside inn
Close by that alder-island in your brook,
'The Angler's Home.'

Dora. Are *you* one?

Harold. No, but I
Take some delight in sketching, and the
country

Has many charms, altho' the inhabitants
Seem semi-barbarous.

Dora. I am glad it pleases you ;
Yet I, born here, not only love the
country,

But its inhabitants too ; and you, I doubt
not,

Would take to them as kindly, if you
cared

To live some time among them.

Harold. If I did,
Then one at least of its inhabitants
Might have more charm for me than all
the country.

Dora. That one, then, should be
grateful for your preference.

Harold. I cannot tell, tho' standing
in her presence.

(*Aside.*) She colours !

Dora. Sir !

Harold. Be not afraid of me,
For these are no conventional flourishes.
I do most earnestly assure you that
Your likeness—

[*Shouts and cries without.*]

Dora. What was that? my poor
blind father—

Enter FARMING MAN

Farming Man. Miss Dora, Dan
Smith's cart hes runned ower a laädy i'
the holler laäne, and they ha' ta'en the
body up inter your chaumber, and they
be all a-callin' for ye.

Dora. The body!—Heavens! I come!

Harold. But you are trembling.
Allow me to go with you to the farm.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter DOBSON

Dobson. What feller wur it as 'a been a-talkin' fur haäfe an hour wi' my Dora? (*Looking after him.*) Seeäms I ommost knaws the back on 'im—drest like a gentleman, too. Damn all gentlemen, says I! I should ha' thowt they'd hed anew o' gentlefoälk, as I telled 'er to-daäy when she fell foul upo' me.

Minds ma o' summun. I could sweär to that; but that be all one, fur I haätes 'im afoor I knaws what 'e be. Theer! he turns round. Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset! Philip Hedgar o' Soomerset!—Noä—yeas—thaw the feller's gone and maäde such a litter of his faäce.

Eh lad, if it be thou, I'll Philip tha! a-plääyin' the saäme gaäme wi' my Dora—I'll Soomerset tha.

I'd like to drag 'im thruff the herse-pond, and she to be a-lookin' at it. I'd like to leather 'im black and blue, and she to be a-laughin' at it. I'd like to fell 'im as deäd as a bullock! (*Clenching his fist.*)

But what 'ud she saäy to that? She telled me once not to meddle wi' 'im, and now she be fallen out wi' ma, and I can't coom at 'er.

It mun be *him*. Noä! Fur she'd niver 'a been talkin' haäfe an hour wi' the divil 'at killed her oän sister, or she beänt Dora Steer.

Y eas! Fur she niver knawed 'is faäce when 'e wur 'ere afoor; but I'll maäke 'er know! I'll maäke 'er know!

Enter HAROLD

Naäy, but I mun git out on 'is waäy now, or I shall be the death on 'im.

[*Exit.*]

Harold. How the clown glared at me! that Dobbins, is it, With whom I used to jar? but can he trace me

Thro' five years' absence, and my change of name,

The tan of southern summers and the beard?

I may as well avoid him.

Ladylike!

Lilylike in her stateliness and sweetness!
How came she by it?—a daughter of the fields,

This Dora!

She gave her hand, unask'd, at the farm-gate;

I almost think she half return'd the pressure

Of mine. What, I that held the orange blossom

Dark as the yew? but may not those, who march

Before their age, turn back at times, and make

Courtesy to custom? and now the stronger motive,

Misnamed free-will—the crowd would call it conscience—

Moves me—to what? I am dreaming; for the past

Look'd thro' the present, Eva's eyes thro' hers—

A spell upon me! Surely I loved Eva More than I knew! or is it but the past

That brightens in retiring? Oh, last night,

Tired, pacing my new lands at Littlechester,

I dozed upon the bridge, and the black river

Flow'd thro' my dreams—if dreams they were. She rose

From the foul flood and pointed toward the farm,

And her cry rang to me across the years,

'I call you, Philip Edgar, Philip Edgar! Come, you will set all right again, and

father Will not die miserable.' I could make

his age A comfort to him—so be more at peace

With mine own self. Some of my former friends

Would find my logic faulty; let them.

Colour

Flows thro' my life again, and I have lighted

On a new pleasure. Anyhow we must Move in the line of least resistance when The stronger motive rules.

But she hates Edgar.

May not this Dobbins, or some other, spy

Edgar in Harold? Well then, I must make her

Love Harold first, and then she will forgive

Edgar for Harold's sake. She said herself

She would forgive him, by-and-by, not now—

For her own sake *then*, if not for mine—not now—

But by-and-by.

Enter DOBSON behind

Dobson. By-and-by—eh, lad, dosta know this paäper? Ye dropt it upo' the road. 'Philip Edgar, Esq.' Ay, you be a pretty squire. I ha' fun' ye out, I hev. Eh, lad, dosta know what tha meäns wi' by-and-by? Fur if ye be goin' to sarve our Dora as ye sarved our Eva—then, by-and-by, if she weänt listen to me when I be a-tryin' to saäve 'er—if she weänt—look to thysen, for, by the Lord, I'd think na moor o' maäkin' an end o' tha nor a carrion crow—noä—thaw they hanged ma at 'Size fur it.

Harold. Dobbins, I think!

Dobson. I beänt Dobbins.

Harold. Nor am I Edgar, my good fellow.

Dobson. Tha lies! What hasta been saäyin' to my Dora?

Harold. I have been telling her of the death of one Philip Edgar of Toft Hall, Somerset.

Dobson. Tha lies!

Harold (*pulling out a newspaper*). Well, my man, it seems that you can read. Look there—under the deaths.

Dobson. 'O' the 17th, Philip Edgar,

o' Toft Hall, Soomerset.' How coom thou to be sa like 'im, then?

Harold. Naturally enough; for I am closely related to the dead man's family.

Dobson. An 'ow coom thou by the letter to 'im?

Harold. Naturally again; for as I used to transact all his business for him, I had to look over his letters. Now then, see these (*takes out letters*). Half a score of them, all directed to me—Harold.

Dobson. 'Arold! 'Arold! 'Arold, so they be.

Harold. My name is Harold! Good day, Dobbins! [*Exit.*]

Dobson. 'Arold! The feller's cleän daäzed, an' maäzed, an' maäted, an' mud-dled ma. Deäd! It mun be true, fur it wur i' print as black as owt. Naäy, but 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Why, that wur the very twang on 'im. Eh, lad, but whether thou be Hedgar, or Hedgar's business man, thou hesn't naw business 'ere wi' my Dora, as I knaws on, an' whether thou calls thysen Hedgar or Harold, if thou stick to she I'll stick to thee—stick to tha like a weasel to a rabbit, I will. Ay! and I'd like to shoot tha like a rabbit an' all. 'Good daäy, Dobbins.' Dang tha!

ACT III

SCENE.—A ROOM IN STEER'S HOUSE.

DOOR LEADING INTO BEDROOM AT THE BACK

Dora (*ringing a handbell*). Milly!

Enter MILLY

Milly. The little 'ymn? Yeäs, Miss; but I wur so ta'en up wi' leädin' the owd man about all the blessed murnin' 'at I ha' nobbut larned mysen haäfe on it.

'O man, forgive thy mortal foe,
Nor ever strike him blow for blow;
For all the souls on earth that live
To be forgiven must forgive.

Forgive him seventy times and seven ;
For all the blessed souls in Heaven
Are both forgivers and forgiven.'

But I'll git the book ageän, and larn
mysen the rest, and saäy it to ye afoor
dark ; ye ringed fur that, Miss, didn't ye?

Dora. No, Milly ; but if the farming-
men be come for their wages, to send
them up to me.

Milly. Yeäs, Miss. [*Exit.*

Dora (*sitting at desk counting money*).
Enough at any rate for the present.
(*Enter Farming Men.*) Good afternoon,
my friends. I am sorry Mr. Steer still
continues too unwell to attend to you,
but the schoolmaster looked to the paying
you your wages when I was away, didn't
he?

Men. Yeäs ; and thanks to ye.

Dora. Some of our workmen have
left us, but he sent me an alphabetical
list of those that remain, so, Allen, I
may as well begin with you.

Allen (*with his hand to his ear*).
Halfabitical ! Taäke one o' the young
'uns fust, Miss, fur I be a bit deaf, and I
wur hallus scaäred by a big word ; leäst-
waäys, I should be wi' a lawyer.

Dora. I spoke of your names, Allen,
as they are arranged here (*shows book*)—
according to their first letters.

Allen. Letters ! Yeas, I sees now.
Them be what they larns the childer' at
school, but I were burn afoor schoolin-
time.

Dora. But, Allen, tho' you can't read,
you could whitewash that cottage of yours
where your grandson had the fever.

Allen. I'll hev it done o' Monday.

Dora. Else if the fever spread, the
parish will have to thank you for it.

Allen. Meä? why, it be the Lord's
doin', noän o' mine ; d'ye think I'd gi'e
'em the fever? But I thanks ye all the
saäme, Miss. (*Takes money.*)

Dora (*calling out names*). Higgins,
Jackson, Luscombe, Nokes, Oldham,
Skipworth ! (*All take money.*) Did you
find that you worked at all the worse

upon the cold tea than you would have
done upon the beer?

Higgins. Noä, Miss ; we worked naw
wuss upo' the cowl tea ; but we'd ha'
worked better upo' the beer.

Dora. Come, come, you worked well
enough, and I am much obliged to all of
you. There's for you, and you, and
you. Count the money and see if it's all
right.

Men. All right, Miss ; and thank ye
kindly.

[*Exeunt* Luscombe, Nokes, Old-
ham, Skipworth.]

Dora. Dan Smith, my father and I
forgave you stealing our coals.

[*Dan Smith advances to Dora.*

Dan Smith (*bellowing*). Whoy, O
lor, Miss ! that wur sa long back, and
the walls sa thin, and the winders
brokken, and the weather sa cowl, and
my missus a-gittin' ower 'er lyn'-in.

Dora. Didn't I say that we had for-
given you? But, Dan Smith, they tell
me that you—and you have six children
—spent all your last Saturday's wages at
the ale-house ; that you were stupid
drunk all Sunday, and so ill in conse-
quence all Monday, that you did not
come into the hayfield. Why should I
pay you your full wages?

Dan Smith. I be ready to taäke the
pledge.

Dora. And as ready to break it again.
Besides it was you that were driving
the cart—and I fear you were tipsy then,
too—when you lamed the lady in the
hollow lane.

Dan Smith (*bellowing*). O lor, Miss !
noä, noä, noä ! Ye sees the holler laäne
be hallus sa dark i' the artemnoon, and
where the big eshtree cuts athurt it, it
gi'es a turn like, and 'ow should I see to
laäme the laädy, and meä coomin' along
pretty sharp an' all?

Dora. Well, there are your wages ;
the next time you waste them at a pot-
house you get no more from me. (*Exit*
Dan Smith.) Sally Allen, you worked
for Mr. Dobson, didn't you?

Sally (advancing). Yeäs, Miss; but he wur so rough wi' ma, I couldn't abide 'im.

Dora. Why should he be rough with you? You are as good as a man in the hay-field. What's become of your brother?

Sally. 'Listed for a soädger, Miss, i' the Queen's Real Hard Tillery.

Dora. And your sweetheart—when are you and he to be married?

Sally. At Michaelmas, Miss, please God.

Dora. You are an honest pair. I will come to your wedding.

Sally. An' I thanks ye fur that, Miss, moor nor fur the waäge.

(Going—returns.) 'A cotched ma about the waaist, Miss, when 'e wur 'ere afoor, an' axed ma to be 'is little sweet-art, an soä I knaw'd 'im when I seed 'im ageän an I telled feyther on 'im.

Dora. What is all this, Allen?

Allen. Why, Miss Dora, meä and my maätes, us three, we wants to hev three words wi' ye.

Higgins. That be 'im, and meä, Miss.

Jackson. An' meä, Miss.

Allen. An' we weänt mention naw naämes, we'd as lief talk o' the Divil afoor ye as 'im, fur they says the master goäs cleän off his 'eäd when he 'eärs the naäme on 'im; but us three, arter Sally'd telled us on 'im, we fun' 'im out a-walkin' i' West Field wi' a white 'at, nine o'clock, upo' Tuesday murnin', and all on us, wi' your leave, we wants to leather 'im.

Dora. Who?

Allen. Him as did the mischief here, five year' sin'.

Dora. Mr. Edgar?

Allen. There, Miss! You ha' naämed 'im—not me.

Dora. He's dead, man—dead; gone to his account—dead and buried.

Allen. I beänt sa sewer o' that, fur Sally knaw'd 'im; Now then?

Dora. Yes; it was in the Somersetshire papers.

Allen. Then yon mun be his brother, an' we'll leather 'im.

Dora. I never heard that he had a

brother. Some foolish mistake of Sally's; but what! would you beat a man for his brother's fault? That were a wild justice indeed. Let bygones be bygones. Go home! Good-night! (*All exeunt.*) I have once more paid them all. The work of the farm will go on still, but for how long? We are almost at the bottom of the well: little more to be drawn from it—and what then? Encumbered as we are, who would lend us anything? We shall have to sell all the land, which Father, for a whole life, has been getting together, again, and that, I am sure, would be the death of him. What am I to do? Farmer Dobson, were I to marry him, has promised to keep our heads above water; and the man has doubtless a good heart, and a true and lasting love for me: yet—though I can be sorry for him—as the good Sally says, 'I can't abide him'—almost brutal, and matched with my Harold is like a hedge thistle by a garden rose. But then, he, too—will he ever be of one faith with his wife? which is my dream of a true marriage. Can I fancy him kneeling with me, and uttering the same prayer; standing up side by side with me, and singing the same hymn? I fear not. Have I done wisely, then, in accepting him? But may not a girl's love-dream have too much romance in it to be realised all at once, or altogether, or anywhere but in Heaven? And yet I had once a vision of a pure and perfect marriage, where the man and the woman, only differing as the stronger and the weaker, should walk hand in hand together down this valley of tears, as they call it so truly, to the grave at the bottom, and lie down there together in the darkness which would seem but for a moment, to be awakened again together by the light of the resurrection, and no more partings for ever and for ever. (*Walks up and down. She sings.*)

'O happy lark, that warblest high
Above thy lowly nest,

O brook, that brawlest merrily by
Thro' fields that once were blest,
O tower spiring to the sky,
O graves in daisies drest,
O Love and Life, how weary am I,
And how I long for rest.'

There, there, I am a fool! Tears! I have sometimes been moved to tears by a chapter of fine writing in a novel; but what have I to do with tears now? All depends on me—Father, this poor girl, the farm, everything; and they both love me—I am all in all to both; and he loves me too, I am quite sure of that. Courage, courage! and all will go well. (*Goes to bedroom door; opens it.*) How dark your room is! Let me bring you in here where there is still full daylight. (*Brings Eva forward.*) Why, you look better.

Eva. And I feel so much better, that I trust I may be able by-and-by to help you in the business of the farm; but I must not be known yet. Has anyone found me out, Dora?

Dora. Oh, no; you kept your veil too close for that when they carried you in; since then, no one has seen you but myself.

Eva. Yes—this Milly.

Dora. Poor blind Father's little guide, Milly, who came to us three years after you were gone, how should she know you? But now that you have been brought to us as it were from the grave, dearest Eva, and have been here so long, will you not speak with Father to-day?

Eva. Do you think that I may? No, not yet. I am not equal to it yet.

Dora. Why? Do you still suffer from your fall in the hollow lane?

Eva. Bruised; but no bones broken.

Dora. I have always told Father that the huge old ashtree there would cause an accident some day; but he would never cut it down, because one of the Steers had planted it there in former times.

Eva. If it had killed one of the

Steers there the other day, it might have been better for her, for him, and for you.

Dora. Come, come, keep a good heart! Better for me! That's good. How better for me?

Eva. You tell me you have a lover. Will he not fly from you if he learn the story of my shame and that I am still living?

Dora. No; I am sure that when we are married he will be willing that you and Father should live with us; for, indeed, he tells me that he met you once in the old times, and was much taken with you, my dear.

Eva. Taken with me; who was he? Have you told him I am here?

Dora. No; do you wish it?

Eva. See, Dora; you yourself are ashamed of me (*weeps*), and I do not wonder at it.

Dora. But I should wonder at myself if it were so. Have we not been all in all to one another from the time when we first peeped into the bird's nest, waded in the brook, ran after the butterflies, and prattled to each other that we would marry fine gentlemen, and played at being fine ladies?

Eva. That last was my Father's fault, poor man. And this lover of yours—this Mr. Harold—is a gentleman?

Dora. That he is, from head to foot. I do believe I lost my heart to him the very first time we met, and I love him so much—

Eva. Poor Dora!

Dora. That I dare not tell him how much I love him.

Eva. Better not. Has he offered you marriage, this gentleman?

Dora. Could I love him else?

Eva. And are you quite sure that after marriage this gentleman will not be shamed of his poor farmer's daughter among the ladies in his drawing-room?

Dora. Shamed of me in a drawing-room! Wasn't Miss Vavasour, our schoolmistress at Littlechester, a lady born? Were not our fellow-pupils all

ladies? Wasn't dear mother herself at least by one side a lady? Can't I speak like a lady; pen a letter like a lady; talk a little French like a lady; play a little like a lady? Can't a girl when she loves her husband, and he her, make herself anything he wishes her to be? Shamed of me in a drawing-room, indeed! See here! 'I hope your Lordship is quite recovered of your gout?' (*Curtsies.*) 'Will your Ladyship ride to cover to-day?' (*Curtsies.*) I can recommend our Voltigeur.' 'I am sorry that we could not attend your Grace's party on the 10th!' (*Curtsies.*) There, I am glad my nonsense has made you smile!

Eva. I have heard that 'your Lordship,' and 'your Ladyship,' and 'your Grace' are all growing old-fashioned!

Dora. But the love of sister for sister can never be old-fashioned. I have been unwilling to trouble you with questions, but you seem somewhat better to-day. We found a letter in your bedroom torn into bits. I couldn't make it out. What was it?

Eva. From him! from him! He said we had been most happy together, and he trusted that some time we should meet again, for he had not forgotten his promise to come when I called him. But that was a mockery, you know, for he gave me no address, and there was no word of marriage; and, O Dora, he signed himself 'Yours gratefully'—fancy, Dora, 'gratefully'! 'Yours gratefully'!

Dora. Infamous wretch! (*Aside.*) Shall I tell her he is dead? No; she is still too feeble.

Eva. Hark! Dora, some one is coming. I cannot and I will not see anybody.

Dora. It is only Milly.

Enter MILLY, with basket of roses

Dora. Well, Milly, why do you come in so roughly? The sick lady here might have been asleep.

Milly. Please, Miss, Mr. Dobson told me to say he's browt some of Miss Eva's roses for the sick laädy to smell on.

Dora. Take them, dear. Say that the sick lady thanks him! Is he here?

Milly. Yeäs, Miss; and he wants to speak to ye partic'lar.

Dora. Tell him I cannot leave the sick lady just yet.

Milly. Yeäs, Miss; but he says he wants to tell ye summut very partic'lar.

Dora. Not to-day. What are you staying for?

Milly. Why, Miss, I be afeard I shall set him a-sweäring like onythink.

Dora. And what harm will that do you, so that you do not copy his bad manners? Go, child. (*Exit Milly.*) But, Eva, why did you write 'Seek me at the bottom of the river'?

Eva. Why? because I meant it!—that dreadful night! that lonely walk to Littlechester, the rain beating in my face all the way, dead midnight when I came upon the bridge; the river, black, slimy, swirling under me in the lamplight, by the rotten wharfs—but I was so mad, that I mounted upon the parapet—

Dora. You make me shudder!

Eva. To fling myself over, when I heard a voice, 'Girl, what are you doing there?' It was a Sister of Mercy, come from the death-bed of a pauper, who had died in his misery blessing God, and the Sister took me to her house, and bit by bit—for she promised secrecy—I told her all.

Dora. And what then?

Eva. She would have persuaded me to come back here, but I couldn't. Then she got me a place as nursery governess, and when the children grew too old for me, and I asked her once more to help me, once more she said, 'Go home'; but I hadn't the heart or face to do it. And then—what would Father say? I sank so low that I went into service—the drudge of a lodging-house—and when the mistress died, and I appealed to the Sister again, her answer—I think I have it about me—yes, there it is!

Dora (reads). 'My dear Child,—I

can do no more for you. I have done wrong in keeping your secret; your Father must be now in extreme old age. Go back to him and ask his forgiveness before he dies. — SISTER AGATHA.' Sister Agatha is right. Don't you long for Father's forgiveness!

Eva. I would almost die to have it!

Dora. And he may die before he gives it; may drop off any day, any hour. You must see him at once. (*Rings bell.* Enter Milly.) Milly, my dear, how did you leave Mr. Steer?

Milly. He's been a-moänin' and a-groänin' in 'is sleep, but I thinks he be wakkenin' oop.

Dora. Tell him that I and the lady here wish to see him. You see she is lamed, and cannot go down to him.

Milly. Yeäs, Miss, I will.

[Exit Milly.]

Dora. I ought to prepare you. You must not expect to find our Father as he was five years ago. He is much altered; but I trust that your return—for you know, my dear, you were always his favourite—will give him, as they say, a new lease of life.

Eva (*clinging to Dora*). Oh, Dora, Dora!

Enter STEER led by MILLY

Steer. Hes the cow cawved?

Dora. No, Father.

Steer. Be the colt deäb?

Dora. No, Father.

Steer. He wur sa bellows'd out wi' the wind this murnin', 'at I tell'd 'em to gallop 'im. Be he deäb?

Dora. Not that I know.

Steer. What hasta sent fur me, then, fur?

Dora (*taking Steer's arm*). Well, Father, I have a surprise for you.

Steer. I ha' niver been surprised but once i' my life, and I went blind upon it.

Dora. Eva has come home.

Steer. Hoäm? fro' the bottom o' the river?

Dora. No, Father, that was a mistake. She's here again.

Steer. The Steers was all gentlefoälks i' the owd times, an' I worked early an' laäte to maäke 'em all gentlefoälks ageän. The land belonged to the Steers i' the owd times, an' it belongs to the Steers ageän: I bowt it back ageän; but I couldn't buy my darter back ageän when she lost hersen, could I? I eddicated boäth on 'em to marry gentlemen, an' one on 'em went an' lost hersen i' the river.

Dora. No, Father, she's here.

Steer. Here! she moänt coom here. What would her mother saäy? If it be her ghoäst, we mun abide it. We can't keep a ghoäst out.

Eva (*falling at his feet*). O forgive me! forgive me!

Steer. Who said that? Taäke me awaäy, little gell. It be one o' my bad daäys.

[Exit Steer led by Milly.]

Dora (*smoothing Eva's forehead*). Be not so cast down, my sweet Eva. You heard him say it was one of his bad days. He will be sure to know you to-morrow.

Eva. It is almost the last of my bad days, I think. I am very faint. I must lie down. Give me your arm. Lead me back again.

[Dora takes Eva into inner room.]

Enter MILLY

Milly. Miss Dora! Miss Dora!

Dora (*returning and leaving the bedroom door ajar*). Quiet! quiet! What is it?

Milly. Mr. 'Arold, Miss.

Dora. Below?

Milly. Yeäs, Miss. He be saäyin' a word to the owd man, but he'll coom up if ye lets 'im.

Dora. Tell him, then, that I'm waiting for him.

Milly. Yeäs, Miss.

[Exit. Dora sits pensively and waits.]

Enter HAROLD

Harold. You are pale, my Dora! but the ruddiest cheek

That ever charm'd the plowman of your
wolds

Might wish its rose a lily, could it look
But half as lovely. I was speaking
with

Your father, asking his consent—you
wish'd me—

That we should marry : he would answer
nothing,

I could make nothing of him ; but, my
flower,

You look so weary and so worn ! What
is it

Has put you out of heart ?

Dora. It puts me in heart
Again to see you ; but indeed the state
Of my poor father puts me out of heart.
Is yours yet living ?

Harold. No—I told you.

Dora. When ?

Harold. Confusion !—Ah well, well !
the state we all

Must come to in our spring-and-winter
world

If we live long enough ! and poor Steer
looks

The very type of Age in a picture, bow'd
To the earth he came from, to the grave
he goes to,

Beneath the burthen of years.

Dora. More like the picture
Of Christian in my 'Pilgrim's Progress'
here,

Bow'd to the dust beneath the burthen
of sin.

Harold. Sin ! What sin ?

Dora. Not his own.

Harold. That nursery-tale
Still read, then ?

Dora. Yes ; our carters and our
shepherds

Still find a comfort there.

Harold. Carters and shepherds !

Dora. Scorn ! I hate scorn. A
soul with no religion—

My mother used to say that such a one
Was without rudder, say, anchor, compass—
might be

Blown everyway with every gust and
wreck

On any rock ; and tho' you are good and
gentle,

Yet if thro' any want—

Harold. Of this religion ?

Child, read a little history, you will find
The common brotherhood of man has
been

Wrong'd by the cruelties of his religions
More than could ever have happen'd thro'
the want

Of any or all of them.

Dora. —But, O dear friend,
If thro' the want of any—I mean the true
one—

And pardon me for saying it—you should
ever

Be tempted into doing what might seem
Not altogether worthy of you, I think
That I should break my heart, for you
have taught me

To love you.

Harold. What is this ? some one been
stirring

Against me ? he, your rustic amourist,
The polish'd Damon of your pastoral here,
This Dobson of your idyll ?

Dora. No, Sir, no !
Did you not tell me he was crazed with
jealousy,

Had threaten'd ev'n your life, and would
say anything ?

Did I not promise not to listen to him,
Nor ev'n to see the man ?

Harold. Good ; then what is it
That makes you talk so dolefully ?

Dora. I told you—
My father. Well, indeed, a friend just
now,

One that has been much wrong'd, whose
griefs are mine,

Was warning me that if a gentleman
Should wed a farmer's daughter, he
would be

Sooner or later shamed of her among
The ladies, born his equals.

Harold. More fool he !
What I that have been call'd a Socialist,
A Communist, a Nihilist—what you
will !—

Dora. What are all these ?

Harold. Utopian idiotcies.
They did not last three Junes. Such
rampant weeds
Strangle each other, die, and make the
soil

For Cæsars, Cromwells, and Napoleons
To root their power in. I have freed
myself
From all such dreams, and some will say
because

I have inherited my Uncle. Let them.
But—shamed of you, my Empress! I
should prize

The pearl of Beauty, even if I found it
Dark with the soot of slums.

Dora. But I can tell you,
We Steers are of old blood, tho' we be
fallen.

See there our shield. (*Pointing to arms
on mantelpiece.*)

For I have heard the Steers
Had land in Saxon times; and your own
name

Of Harold sounds so English and so old
I am sure you must be proud of it.

Harold. Not I!
As yet I scarcely feel it mine. I took it
For some three thousand acres. I have
land now

And wealth, and lay both at your feet.

Dora. And *what* was
Your name before?

Harold. Come, come, my girl, enough
Of this strange talk. I love you and you
me.

True, I have held opinions, hold some
still,

Which you would scarce approve of: for
all that,

I am a man not prone to jealousies,
Caprices, humours, moods; but very
ready

To make allowances, and mighty slow
To feel offences. Nay, I do believe
I could forgive—well, almost anything—
And that more freely than your formal
priest,

Because I know more fully than *he* can
What poor earthworms are all and each
of us,

T

Here crawling in this boundless Nature.

Dora,
If marriage ever brought a woman happi-
ness

I doubt not I can make you happy.

Dora. You make me
Happy already.

Harold. And I never said
As much before to any woman living.

Dora. No?

Harold. No! by this true kiss, *you*
are the first

I ever have loved truly.

[*They kiss each other.*]

Eva (with a wild cry). Philip Edgar!

Harold. The phantom cry! *You—*
did *you* hear a cry?

Dora. She must be crying out 'Edgar'
in her sleep.

Harold. Who must be crying out
'Edgar' in her sleep?

Dora. Your pardon for a minute.
She must be waked.

Harold. Who must be waked?

Dora. I am not deaf: you fright me.
What ails you?

Harold. Speak.

Dora. You know her, *Eva.*

Harold. *Eva!*

[*Eva opens the door and stands in the entry.*
She!

Eva. Make her happy, then, and I
forgive you. [*Falls dead.*]

Dora. Happy! What? Edgar? Is
it so? Can it be?

They told me so. Yes, yes! I see it
all now.

O she has fainted. Sister, *Eva*, sister!
He is yours again—he will love *you*
again;

I give him back to you again. Look
up!

One word, or do but smile! Sweet, do
you hear me?

[*Puts her hand on Eva's heart.*]

There, there—the heart, O God!—the
poor young heart

Broken at last—all still—and nothing left
To live for.

[*Falls on body of her sister.*]

Harold. Living . . . dead . . .
 She said 'all still.
 Nothing to live for.'

She—she knows me—now . . .
(A pause.)

She knew me from the first, she juggled
 with me,

She hid this sister, told me she was
 dead—

I have wasted pity on her—not dead
 now—

No ! acting, playing on me, both of them.
They drag the river for her ! no, not
 they !

Playing on me—not dead now—a swoon
 —a scene—

Yet—how she made her wail as for the
 dead !

Enter MILLY

Milly. Pleäse, Mister 'Arold.

Harold (roughly). Well ?

Milly. The owd man's coom'd ageän
 to 'issen, an' wants

To hev a word wi' ye about the marriage.

Harold. The what ?

Milly. The marriage.

Harold. The marriage ?

Milly. Yeäs, the marriage.

Granny says marriages be maäde i' 'eaven.

Harold. She lies ! They are made
 in Hell. Child, can't you see ?

Tell them to fly for a doctor.

Milly. O law—yeäs, Sir !

I'll run fur 'im mysen. *[Exit.*

Harold. All silent there,

Yes, deathlike ! Dead ? I dare not
 look : if dead,

Were it best to steal away, to spare my-
 self,

And her too, pain, pain, pain ?

My curse on all
 This world of mud, on all its idiot gleams
 Of pleasure, all the foul fatalities
 That blast our natural passions into
 pains !

Enter DOBSON

Dobson. You, Master Hedgar, Harold,
 or whativer

They calls ye, for I warrants that ye goäs
 By haäfe a scoor o' naämes—out o' the
 chaumber.

[Dragging him past the body.

Harold. Not that way, man ! Curse
 on your brutal strength !

I cannot pass that way.

Dobson. Out o' the chaumber !

I'll mash tha into nowt.

Harold. The mere wild-beast !

Dobson. Out o' the chaumber, dang
 tha !

Harold. Lout, churl, clown !

*[While they are shouting and strug-
 gling Dora rises and comes be-
 tween them.]*

Dora (to Dobson). Peace, let him be :
 it is the chamber of Death !

Sir, you are tenfold more a gentleman,
 A hundred times more worth a woman's
 love,

Than this, this—but I waste no words
 upon him :

His wickedness is like my wretchedness—
 Beyond all language.

(To Harold.)

You—you see her there !

Only fifteen when first you came on her,
 And then the sweetest flower of all the
 wolds,

So lovely in the promise of her May,
 So winsome in her grace and gaiety,
 So loved by all the village people here,
 So happy in herself and in her home—

Dobson (agitated). Theer, theer ! ha'
 done. I can't abeär to see her.

[Exit.

Dora. A child, and all as trustful as
 a child !

Five years of shame and suffering broke
 the heart

That only beat for you ; and he, the
 father,

Thro' that dishonour which you brought
 upon us,

Has lost his health, his eyesight, even
 his mind.

Harold (covering his face). Enough !

Dora. It seem'd so ; only there was
 left

A second daughter, and to her you came
Veiling one sin to act another.

Harold. No!

You wrong me there! hear, hear me!

I wish'd, if you—— [*Pauses.*

Dora. If I——

Harold. Could love me, could be
brought to love me

As I loved you——

Dora. What then?

Harold. I wish'd, I hoped

To make, to make——

Dora. What did you hope to make?

Harold. 'Twere best to make an end
of my lost life.

O Dora, Dora!

Dora. What did you hope to make?

Harold. Make, make! I cannot find
the word—forgive it—

Amends.

Dora. For what? to whom?

Harold. To him, to you!

[*Falling at her feet.*

Dora. To him! to me!

No, not with all your wealth,
Your land, your life! Out in the fiercest
storm

That ever made earth tremble—he,
nor I—

The shelter of *your* roof—not for one
moment—

Nothing from *you*!

Sunk in the deepest pit of pauperism,
Push'd from all doors as if we bore the
plague,

Smitten with fever in the open field,
Laid famine-stricken at the gates of
Death—

Nothing from you!

But she there—her last word
Forgave—and I forgive you. If you
ever

Forgive yourself, you are even lower
and baser

Than even I can well believe you. Go!

[*He lies at her feet. Curtain falls.*

THE FORESTERS

ROBIN HOOD AND MAID MARIAN

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ROBIN HOOD, *Earl of Huntingdon.*
 KING RICHARD, *Cœur de Lion.*
 PRINCE JOHN.
 LITTLE JOHN,
 WILL SCARLET,
 FRIAR TUCK, } *Followers of Robin Hood.*
 MUCH,
 A JUSTICIARY.
 SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM.
 ABBOT OF ST. MARY'S.
 SIR RICHARD LEA.
 WALTER LEA, *son of Sir Richard Lea.*
 MAID MARIAN, *daughter of Sir Richard Lea.*
 KATE, *attendant on Marian.*
 OLD WOMAN.

*Retainers, Messengers, Merry Men, Mercenaries, Friars, Beggars, Sailors,
 Peasants (men and women), etc.*

ACT I

SCENE I.—THE BOND

SCENES II. III.—THE OUTLAWRY

SCENE I.—THE GARDEN BEFORE SIR RICHARD LEA'S CASTLE

Kate (gathering flowers). These roses for my Lady Marian; these lilies to lighten Sir Richard's black room, where he sits and eats his heart for want of money to pay the Abbot. [Sings.

The warrior Earl of Allendale,
 He loved the Lady Anne;
 The lady loved the master well,
 The maid she loved the man.

All in the castle garden,
 Or ever the day began,
 The lady gave a rose to the Earl,
 The maid a rose to the man.

'I go to fight in Scotland
 With many a savage clan;'
 The lady gave her hand to the Earl,
 The maid her hand to the man.

'Farewell, farewell, my warrior Earl!'
 And ever a tear down ran.
 She gave a weeping kiss to the Earl,
 And the maid a kiss to the man.

Enter four ragged RETAINERS

First Retainer. You do well, Mistress Kate, to sing and to gather roses. You be fed with tit-bits, you, and we be dogs that have only the bones, till we be only bones our own selves.

Kate. I am fed with tit-bits no more than you are, but I keep a good heart and make the most of it, and, truth to say, Sir Richard and my Lady Marian fare wellnigh as sparsely as their people.

Second Retainer. And look at our suits, out at knee, out at elbow. We be more like scarecrows in a field than decent serving men; and then, I pray you, look at Robin Earl of Huntingdon's men.

First Retainer. She hath looked well at one of 'em, Little John.

Third Retainer. Ay, how fine they be in their liveries, and each of 'em as full of meat as an egg, and as sleek and as round-about as a mellow codlin.

Fourth Retainer. But I be worse off than any of you, for I be lean by nature, and if you cram me crop-full I be little better than Famine in the picture, but it you starve me I be Gaffer Death himself.

I would like to show you, Mistress Kate, how bare and spare I be on the rib: I be lanker than an old horse turned out to die on the common.

Kate. Spare me thy spare ribs, I pray thee; but now I ask you all, did none of you love young Walter Lea?

First Retainer. Ay, if he had not gone to fight the king's battles, we should have better battels at home.

Kate. Right as an Oxford scholar, but the boy was taken prisoner by the Moors.

First Retainer. Ay.

Kate. And Sir Richard was told he might be ransomed for two thousand marks in gold.

First Retainer. Ay.

Kate. Then he borrowed the monies from the Abbot of York, the Sheriff's brother. And if they be not paid back at the end of the year, the land goes to the Abbot.

First Retainer. No news of young Walter?

Kate. None, nor of the gold, nor the man who took out the gold: but now ye know why we live so stintedly, and why ye have so few grains to peck at. Sir Richard must scrape and scrape till he get to the land again. Come, come, why do ye loiter here? Carry fresh rushes into the dining-hall, for those that are there, they be so greasy, and smell so vilely that my Lady Marian holds her nose when she steps across it.

Fourth Retainer. Why there, now! that very word 'greasy' hath a kind of unction in it, a smack of relish about it. The rats have gnawed 'em already. I pray Heaven we may not have to take to the rushes. *[Exeunt.]*

Kate. Poor fellows!

The lady gave her hand to the Earl,
The maid her hand to the man.

Enter LITTLE JOHN

Little John. My master, Robin the Earl, is always a-telling us that every man, for the sake of the great blessed

Mother in heaven, and for the love of his own little mother on earth, should handle all womankind gently, and hold them in all honour, and speak small to 'em, and not scare 'em, but go about to come at their love with all manner of homages, and observances, and circum-bendibuses.

Kate. The lady gave a rose to the Earl,
The maid a rose to the man.

Little John (seeing her). O the sacred little thing! What a shape! what lovely arms! A rose to the man! Ay, the man had given her a rose and she gave him another.

Kate. Shall I keep one little rose for Little John? No.

Little John. There, there! You see I was right. She hath a tenderness toward me, but is too shy to show it. It is in her, in the woman, and the man must bring it out of her.

Kate. She gave a weeping kiss to the Earl,
The maid a kiss to the man.

Little John. Did she? But there I am sure the ballad is at fault. It should have told us how the man first kissed the maid. She doesn't see me. Shall I be bold? shall I touch her? shall I give her the first kiss? O sweet Kate, my first love, the first kiss, the first kiss!

Kate (turns and kisses him). Why lookest thou so amazed?

Little John. I cannot tell; but I came to give thee the first kiss, and thou hast given it me.

Kate. But if a man and a maid care for one another, does it matter so much if the maid give the first kiss?

Little John. I cannot tell, but I had sooner have given thee the first kiss. I was dreaming of it all the way hither.

Kate. Dream of it, then, all the way back, for now I will have none of it.

Little John. Nay, now thou hast given me the man's kiss, let me give thee the maid's.

Kate. If thou draw one inch nearer, I will give thee a buffet on the face.

Little John. Wilt thou not give me
after the little rose for Little John?

Kate (throws it down and tramples on it). There!

[*Kate, seeing Marian, exit hurriedly.*]

Enter MARIAN (singing)

Love flew in at the window

As Wealth walk'd in at the door.

'You have come for you saw Wealth coming,'
said I.

But he flutter'd his wings with a sweet little cry,
I'll cleave to you rich or poor.

Wealth dropt out of the window,

Poverty crept thro' the door.

'Well now you would fain follow Wealth,' said I,
But he flutter'd his wings as he gave me the lie,
I cling to you all the more.

Little John. Thanks, my lady—inasmuch as I am a true believer in true love myself, and your Ladyship hath sung the old proverb out of fashion.

Marian. Ay but thou hast ruffled my woman, Little John. She hath the fire in her face and the dew in her eyes. I believed thee to be too solemn and formal to be a ruffler. Out upon thee!

Little John. I am no ruffler, my lady; but I pray you, my lady, if a man and a maid love one another, may the maid give the first kiss?

Marian. It will be all the more gracious of her if she do.

Little John. I cannot tell. Manners be so corrupt, and these are the days of Prince John. [*Exit.*]

Enter SIR RICHARD LEA (reading a bond)

Sir Richard. Marian!

Marian. Father!

Sir Richard. Who parted from thee even now?

Marian. That strange starched stiff creature, Little John, the Earl's man. He would grapple with a lion like the King, and is flustered by a girl's kiss.

Sir Richard. There never was an Earl so true a friend of the people as Lord Robin of Huntingdon.

Marian. A gallant Earl. I love him as I hate John.

Sir Richard. I fear me he hath wasted his revenues in the service of our good king Richard against the party of John, as I have done, as I have done: and where is Richard?

Marian. Cleave to him, father! he will come home at last.

Sir Richard. I trust he will, but if he do not I and thou are but beggars.

Marian. We will be beggar'd then and be true to the King.

Sir Richard. Thou speakest like a fool or a woman. Canst thou endure to be a beggar whose whole life hath been folded like a blossom in the sheath, like a careless sleeper in the down; who never hast felt a want, to whom all things, up to this present, have come as freely as heaven's air and mother's milk?

Marian. Tut, father! I am none of your delicate Norman maidens who can only broider and mayhap ride a-hawking with the help of the men. I can bake and I can brew, and by all the saints I can shoot almost as closely with the bow as the great Earl himself. I have played at the foils too with Kate: but is not to-day his birthday?

Sir Richard. Dost thou love him indeed, that thou keepest a record of his birthdays? Thou knowest that the Sheriff of Nottingham loves thee.

Marian. The Sheriff dare to love me? me who worship Robin the great Earl of Huntingdon? I love him as a damsel of his day might have loved Harold the Saxon, or Hereward the Wake. They both fought against the tyranny of the kings, the Normans. But then your Sheriff, your little man, if he dare to fight at all, would fight for his rents, his leases, his houses, his monies, his oxen, his dinners, himself. Now your great man, your Robin, all England's Robin, fights not for himself but for the people of England. This John—this Norman tyranny—the stream is bearing us all down, and our little

Sheriff will ever swim with the stream ! but our great man, our Robin, against it. And how often in old histories have the great men striven against the stream, and how often in the long sweep of years to come must the great man strive against it again to save his country, and the liberties of his people ! God bless our well-beloved Robin, Earl of Huntingdon.

Sir Richard. Ay, ay. He wore thy colours once at a tourney. I am old and forget. Was Prince John there ?

Marian. The Sheriff of Nottingham was there—not John.

Sir Richard. Beware of John and the Sheriff of Nottingham. They hunt in couples, and when they look at a maid they blast her.

Marian. Then the maid is not high-hearted enough.

Sir Richard. There—there—be not a fool again. Their aim is ever at that which flies highest—but O girl, girl, I am almost in despair. Those two thousand marks lent me by the Abbot for the ransom of my son Walter—I believed this Abbot of the party of King Richard, and he hath sold himself to that beast John—they must be paid in a year and a month, or I lose the land. There is one that should be grateful to me overseas, a Count in Brittany—he lives near Quimper. I saved his life once in battle. He has monies. I will go to him. I saved him. I will try him. I am all but sure of him. I will go to him.

Marian. And I will follow thee, and God help us both.

Sir Richard. Child, thou shouldst marry one who will pay the mortgage. This Robin, this Earl of Huntingdon—he is a friend of Richard—I know not, but he may save the land, he may save the land.

Marian (showing a cross hung round her neck). Father, you see this cross ?

Sir Richard. Ay the King, thy godfather, gave it thee when a baby.

Marian. And he said that whenever I married he would give me away, and

on this cross I have sworn [*kisses it*] that till I myself pass away, there is no other man that shall give me away.

Sir Richard. Lo there—thou art fool again—I am all as loyal as thyself, but what a vow ! what a vow !

Re-enter LITTLE JOHN

Little John. My Lady Marian, your woman so flustered me that I forgot my message from the Earl. To-day he hath accomplished his thirtieth birthday, and he prays your ladyship and your ladyship's father to be present at his banquet to-night.

Marian. Say, we will come.

Little John. And I pray you, my lady, to stand between me and your woman, Kate.

Marian. I will speak with her.

Little John. I thank you, my lady, and I wish you and your ladyship's father a most exceedingly good morning.

[*Exit.*]

Sir Richard. Thou hast answered for me, but I know not if I will let thee go.

Marian. I mean to go.

Sir Richard. Not if I barred thee up in thy chamber, like a bird in a cage.

Marian. Then I would drop from the casement, like a spider.

Sir Richard. But I would hoist the drawbridge, like thy master.

Marian. And I would swim the moat, like an otter.

Sir Richard. But I would set my men-at-arms to oppose thee, like the Lord of the Castle.

Marian. And I would break through them all, like the King of England.

Sir Richard. Well, thou shalt go, but O the land ! the land ! my great great great grandfather, my great great grandfather, my great grandfather, my grandfather and my own father—they were born and bred on it—it was their mother—they have trodden it for half a thousand years, and whenever I set my own foot on it I say to it, Thou art

mine, and it answers, I am thine to the very heart of the earth—but now I have lost my gold, I have lost my son, and I shall lose my land also. Down to the devil with this bond that beggars me !

[*Flings down the bond.*]

Marian. Take it again, dear father, be not wroth at the dumb parchment. Sufficient for the day, dear father ! let us be merry to-night at the banquet.

SCENE II.—A HALL IN THE HOUSE OF ROBIN HOOD THE EARL OF HUNTINGDON. DOORS OPEN INTO A BANQUETING-HALL WHERE HE IS AT FEAST WITH HIS FRIENDS

DRINKING SONG

Long live Richard,
Robin and Richard !
Long live Richard !
Down with John !
Drink to the Lion-heart
Every one !
Pledge the Plantagenet,
Him that is gone.
Who knows whither ?
God's good Angel
Help him back hither,
And down with John !
Long live Robin,
Robin and Richard !
Long live Robin,
And down with John !

Enter PRINCE JOHN *disguised as a monk* and the SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM. *Cries of 'Down with John,' 'Long live King Richard,' 'Down with John'*

Prince John. Down with John ! ha. Shall I be known ? is my disguise perfect ?

Sheriff. Perfect—who should know you for Prince John, so that you keep the cowl down and speak not ?

[*Shouts from the banquet-room.*]

Prince John. Thou and I will still these revelries presently.

[*Shouts, 'Long live King Richard !'*]
I come here to see this daughter of Sir Richard of the Lea and if her beauties answer their report. If so—

Sheriff. If so—

[*Shouts, 'Down with John !'*]

Prince John. You hear !

Sheriff. Yes, my lord, fear not. I will answer for you.

Enter LITTLE JOHN, SCARLET, MUCH, *etc., from the banquet singing a snatch of the Drinking Song*

Little John. I am a silent man myself, and all the more wonder at our Earl. What a wealth of words—O Lord, I will live and die for King Richard—not so much for the cause as for the Earl. O Lord, I am easily led by words, but I think the Earl hath right. Scarlet, hath not the Earl right ? What makes thee so down in the mouth ?

Scarlet. I doubt not, I doubt not, and though I be down in the mouth, I will swear by the head of the Earl.

Little John. Thou Much, miller's son, hath not the Earl right ?

Much. More water goes by the mill than the miller wots of, and more goes to make right than I know of, but for all that I will swear the Earl hath right. But they are coming hither for the dance—

Enter FRIAR TUCK

be they not, Friar Tuck ? Thou art the Earl's confessor and shouldst know.

Tuck. Ay, ay, and but that I am a man of weight, and the weight of the church to boot on my shoulders, I would dance too. Fa, la, la, fa, la, la.

[*Capering.*]

Much. But doth not the weight of the flesh at odd times overbalance the weight of the church, ha friar ?

Tuck. Homo sum. I love my dinner—but I can fast, I can fast ; and as to other frailties of the flesh—out upon thee ! Homo sum, sed virgo sum, I am a virgin, my masters, I am a virgin.

Much. And a virgin, my masters, three yards about the waist is like to remain a virgin, for who could embrace such an armful of joy ?

Tuck. Knave, there is a lot of wild fellows in Sherwood Forest who hold by King Richard. If ever I meet thee there, I will break thy sconce with my quarterstaff.

Enter from the banqueting-hall

SIR RICHARD LEA, ROBIN HOOD, *etc.*

Robin. My guests and friends, Sir Richard, all of you
Who deign to honour this my thirtieth year,
And some of you were prophets that I might be

Now that the sun our King is gone, the light
Of these dark hours ; but this new moon,
I fear,

Is darkness. Nay, this may be the last time
When I shall hold my birthday in this hall :

I may be outlaw'd, I have heard a rumour.

All. God forbid !

Robin. Nay, but we have no news of Richard yet,
And ye did wrong in crying 'Down with John' ;
For be he dead, then John may be our King.

All. God forbid !

Robin. Ay God forbid,
But if it be so we must bear with John.
The man is able enough—no lack of wit,
And apt at arms and shrewd in policy.
Courteous enough too when he wills ;
and yet

I hate him for his want of chivalry.
He that can pluck the flower of maidenhood

From off the stalk and trample it in the mire,

And boast that he hath trampled it. I hate him,

I hate the man. I may not hate the King

For aught I know,
So that our Barons bring his baseness under.

I think they will be mightier than the king.
[*Dance music.*]

MARIAN enters with other damsels

Robin. The high Heaven guard thee from his wantonness,
Who art the fairest flower of maidenhood
That ever blossom'd on this English isle.

Marian. Cloud not thy birthday with one fear for me.

My lord, myself and my good father pray
Thy thirtieth summer may be thirty-fold
As happy as any of those that went before.

Robin. My Lady Marian you can make it so
If you will deign to tread a measure with me.

Marian. Full willingly, my lord.
[*They dance.*]

Robin (after dance). My Lady, will you answer me a question ?

Marian. Any that you may ask.

Robin. A question that every true man asks of a woman once in his life.

Marian. I will not answer it, my lord, till King Richard come home again.

Prince John (to Sheriff). How she looks up at him, how she holds her face !

Now if she kiss him, I will have his head.

Sheriff. Peace, my lord ; the Earl and Sir Richard come this way.

Robin. Must you have these monies before the year and the month end ?

Sir Richard. Or I forfeit my land to the Abbot. I must pass overseas to one that I trust will help me.

Robin. Leaving your fair Marian alone here.

Sir Richard. Ay, for she hath somewhat of the lioness in her, and there be men-at-arms to guard her.

[*Robin, Sir Richard, and Marian pass on.*]

Prince John (to Sheriff). Why that will be our opportunity

When I and thou will rob the nest of her.
Sheriff. Good Prince, art thou in need of any gold ?

Prince John. Gold? why? not now.
Sheriff. I would give thee any gold
 So that myself alone might rob the nest.

Prince John. Well, well then, thou
 shalt rob the nest alone.

Sheriff. Swear to me by that relic
 on thy neck.

Prince John. I swear then by this
 relic on my neck—

No, no, I will not swear by this; I
 keep it

For holy vows made to the blessed Saints
 Not pleasures, women's matters.

Dost thou mistrust me? Am I not thy
 friend?

Beware, man, lest thou lose thy faith
 in me.

I love thee much; and as I *am* thy
 friend,

I promise thee to make this Marian
 thine.

Go now and ask the maid to dance with
 thee,

And learn from her if she do love this
 Earl.

Sheriff (*advancing toward Marian
 and Robin*). Pretty mistress!

Robin. What art thou, man? Sheriff
 of Nottingham?

Sheriff. Ay, my lord. I and my
 friend, this monk, were here belated,
 and seeing the hospitable lights in your
 castle, and knowing the fame of your
 hospitality, we ventured in uninvited.

Robin. You are welcome, though I
 fear you be of those who hold more by
 John than Richard.

Sheriff. True, for through John I
 had my sheriffship. I am John's till
 Richard come back again, and then I
 am Richard's. Pretty mistress, will you
 dance? [*They dance.*]

Robin (*talking to Prince John*).
 What monk of what convent art thou?
 Why wearest thou thy cowl to hide thy
 face?

[*Prince John shakes his head.*]

Is he deaf, or dumb, or daft, or drunk
 belike?

[*Prince John shakes his head.*]

Why comest thou like a death's head at
 my feast?

[*Prince John points to the Sheriff,
 who is dancing with Marian.*]

Is he thy mouthpiece, thine interpreter?
 [*Prince John nods.*]

Sheriff (*to Marian as they pass*). Be-
 ware of John!

Marian. I hate him.

Sheriff. Would you cast
 An eye of favour on me, I would pay
 My brother all his debt and save the
 land.

Marian. I cannot answer thee till
 Richard come.

Sheriff. And when he comes?

Marian. Well, you must wait till
 then.

Little John (*dancing with Kate*). Is
 it made up? Will you kiss me?

Kate. You shall give me the first
 kiss.

Little John. There (*kisses her*). Now
 then.

Kate. You shall wait for mine till
 Sir Richard has paid the Abbot.

[*They pass on.*]

[*The Sheriff leaves Marian with her
 father and comes toward Robin.*]

Robin (*to Sheriff, Prince John standing
 by*). Sheriff, thy friend, this monk, is
 but a statue.

Sheriff. Pardon him, my lord: he
 is a holy Palmer, bounden by a vow not
 to show his face, nor to speak word to
 anyone, till he join King Richard in the
 Holy Land.

Robin. Going to the Holy Land to
 Richard! Give me thy hand and tell
 him—— Why, what a cold grasp is
 thine—as if thou didst repent thy courtesy
 even in the doing it. That is no true
 man's hand. I hate hidden faces.

Sheriff. Pardon him again, I pray
 you; but the twilight of the coming day
 already glimmers in the east. We thank
 you, and farewell.

Robin. Farewell, farewell. I hate
 hidden faces.

[*Exeunt Prince John and Sheriff.*]

Sir Richard (*coming forward with Maid Marian*). How close the Sheriff peer'd into thine eyes !
What did he say to thee ?

Marian. Bade me beware
Of John : what maid but would beware
of John ?

Sir Richard. What else ?

Marian. I care not what he said.

Sir Richard. What else ?

Marian. That if I cast an eye of
favour on him,
Himself would pay this mortgage to his
brother,
And save the land.

Sir Richard. Did he say so, the
Sheriff ?

Robin. I fear this Abbot is a heart
of flint,
Hard as the stones of his abbey.

O good Sir Richard,
I am sorry my exchequer runs so low
I cannot help you in this exigency ;
For though my men and I flash out at
times

Of festival like burnish'd summer-flies,
We make but one hour's buzz, are only
like

The rainbow of a momentary sun.
I am mortgaged as thyself.

Sir Richard. Ay ! I warrant thee—
thou canst not be sorrier than I am.
Come away, daughter.

Robin. Farewell, Sir Richard ; fare-
well, sweet Marian.

Marian. Till better times.

Robin. But if the better times should
never come ?

Marian. Then I shall be no worse.

Robin. And if the worst time come ?

Marian. Why then I will be better
than the time.

Robin. This ring my mother gave
me : it was her own
Betrothal ring. She pray'd me when I
loved
A maid with all my heart to pass it
down
A finger of that hand which should be
mine

Thereafter. Will you have it ? Will
you wear it ?

Marian. Ay, noble Earl, and never
part with it.

Sir Richard Lea (*coming up*). Not
till she clean forget thee, noble
Earl.

Marian. Forget him—never—by
this Holy Cross
Which good King Richard gave me
when a child—

Never !

Not while the swallow skims along the
ground,

And while the lark flies up and touches
heaven !

Not while the smoke floats from the
cottage roof,

And the white cloud is roll'd along the
sky !

Not while the rivulet babbles by the
door,

And the great breaker beats upon the
beach !

Never—

Till Nature, high and low, and great
and small

Forgets herself, and all her loves and
hates

Sink again into chaos.

Sir Richard Lea. Away ! away !
[*Exeunt to music.*]

SCENE III.—SAME AS SCENE II

ROBIN and his men

Robin. All gone !—my ring—I am
happy—should be happy.

She took my ring. I trust she loves me
—yet

I heard this Sheriff tell her he would
pay

The mortgage if she favour'd him. I
fear

Not her, the father's power upon her.

Friends, (*to his men*)

I am only merry for an hour or two
Upon a birthday : if this life of ours

Be a good glad thing, why should we
make us merry

Because a year of it is gone? but Hope
Smiles from the threshold of the year to
come

Whispering 'it will be happier,' and old
faces

Press round us, and warm hands close
with warm hands,

And thro' the blood the wine leaps to
the brain

Like April sap to the topmost tree, that
shoots

New buds to heaven, whereon the
throstle rock'd

Sings a new song to the new year—and
you

Strike up a song, my friends, and then
to bed.

Little John. What will you have, my
lord?

Robin. 'To sleep! to sleep!'

Little John. There is a touch of sad-
ness in it, my lord,

But ill befitting such a festal day.

Robin. I have a touch of sadness in
myself.

Sing.

SONG

To sleep! to sleep! The long bright day is done,
And darkness rises from the fallen sun.

To sleep! to sleep!

Whate'er thy joys, they vanish with the day;

Whate'er thy griefs, in sleep they fade away.

To sleep! to sleep!

Sleep, mournful heart, and let the past be past!

Sleep, happy soul! all life will sleep at last.

To sleep! to sleep!

[*A trumpet blown at the gates.*]

Robin. Who breaks the stillness of
the morning thus?

Little John (*going out and returning*).
It is a royal messenger, my lord:

I trust he brings us news of the King's
coming.

Enter a PURSUIVANT who reads

O yes, O yes, O yes! In the name
of the Regent. Thou, Robin Hood Earl
of Huntingdon, art attainted and hast
lost thine earldom of Huntingdon.

Moreover thou art dispossessed of all
thy lands, goods, and chattels; and by
virtue of this writ, whereas Robin Hood
Earl of Huntingdon by force and arms
hath trespassed against the king in
divers manners, therefore by the judgment
of the officers of the said lord king,
according to the law and custom of the
kingdom of England Robin Hood Earl
of Huntingdon is outlawed and banished.

Robin. I have shelter'd some that
broke the forest laws.

This is irregular and the work of John.

[*'Irregular, irregular! (tumult)*

Down with him, tear his coat
from his back.'

Messenger. Ho there! ho there, the
Sheriff's men without!

Robin. Nay, let them be, man, let
them be. We yield.

How should we cope with John? The
London folkmote

Has made him all but king, and he hath
seized

On half the royal castles. Let him
alone! (*to his men*)

A worthy messenger! how should he
help it?

Shall we too work injustice? what, thou
shakest!

Here, here—a cup of wine—drink and
begone!

[*Exit Messenger.*]

We will away in four-and-twenty hours,
But shall we leave our England?

Tuck.

Robin, Earl—

Robin. Let be the Earl. Henceforth
I am no more

Than plain man to plain man.

Tuck.

Well, then, plain man,
There be good fellows there in merry
Sherwood

That hold by Richard, tho' they kill his
deer.

Robin. In Sherwood Forest. I have
heard of them.

Have they no leader?

Tuck.

Each man for his own.
Be thou their leader and they will all of
them

Swarm to thy voice like bees to the brass pan.

Robin. They hold by Richard—the wild wood! to cast
All threadbare household habit, mix with all

The lusty life of wood and underwood,
Hawk, buzzard, jay, the mavis and the merle,

The tawny squirrel vaulting thro' the boughs,

The deer, the highback'd polecat, the wild boar,

The burrowing badger—By St. Nicholas
I have a sudden passion for the wild wood—

We should be free as air in the wild wood—

What say you? shall we go? Your hands, your hands!

[*Gives his hand to each.*]

You, Scarlet, you are always moody here.

Scarlet. 'Tis for no lack of love to you, my lord,
But lack of happiness in a blatant wife.
She broke my head on Tuesday with a dish.

I would have thwack'd the woman, but I did not,

Because thou sayest such fine things of women,

But I shall have to thwack her if I stay.

Robin. Would it be better for thee in the wood?

Scarlet. Ay, so she did not follow me to the wood.

Robin. Then, Scarlet, thou at least wilt go with me.

Thou, Much, the miller's son, I knew thy father:

He was a manly man, as thou art, Much,
And gray before his time as thou art, Much.

Much. It is the trick of the family, my lord.

There was a song he made to the turning wheel—

Robin. 'Turn! turn!' but I forget it.

Much. I can sing it.

Robin. Not now, good Much! And thou, dear Little John,
Who hast that worship for me which Heaven knows

I ill deserve—you love me, all of you,
But I am outlaw'd, and if caught, I die.
Your hands again. All thanks for all your service;

But if you follow me, you may die with me.

All. We will live and die with thee,
we will live and die with thee.

ACT II

THE FLIGHT OF MARIAN

SCENE I.—A BROAD FOREST GLADE,
WOODMAN'S HUT AT ONE SIDE WITH
HALF-DOOR. FORESTERS ARE LOOK-
ING TO THEIR BOWS AND ARROWS,
OR POLISHING THEIR SWORDS

FORESTERS *sing* (as they disperse to their work)

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no hearts like English hearts
Such hearts of oak as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no men like Englishmen
So tall and bold as they be.

(Full chorus.) And these will strike for England
And man and maid be free
To foil and spoil the tyrant
Beneath the greenwood tree.

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no wives like English wives
So fair and chaste as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no maids like English maids
So beautiful as they be.

(Full chorus.) And these shall wed with freemen,
And all their sons be free,
To sing the songs of England
Beneath the greenwood tree.

Robin (alone). My lonely hour !
 The king of day hath stept from off his throne,
 Flung by the golden mantle of the cloud,
 And sets, a naked fire. The King of England
 Perchance this day may sink as gloriously,
 Red with his own and enemy's blood—but no !
 We hear he is in prison. It is my birthday.
 I have reign'd one year in the wild wood.
 My mother,
 For whose sake, and the blessed Queen of Heaven,
 I reverence all women, bad me, dying,
 Whene'er this day should come about, to carve
 One lone hour from it, so to meditate
 Upon my greater nearness to the birthday
 Of the after-life, when all the sheeted dead
 Are shaken from their stillness in the grave
 By the last trumpet.

Am I worse or better ?
 I am outlaw'd. I am none the worse for that.
 I held for Richard, and I hated John.
 I am a thief, ay, and a king of thieves.
 Ay ! but we rob the robber, wrong the wronger,
 And what we wring from them we give the poor.
 I am none the worse for that, and all the better
 For this free forest-life, for while I sat
 Among my thralls in my baronial hall
 The groining hid the heavens ; but since I breathed,
 A houseless head beneath the sun and stars,
 The soul of the woods hath stricken thro' my blood,
 The love of freedom, the desire of God,
 The hope of larger life hereafter, more
 Tenfold than under roof.

[*Horn blown.*
 True, were I taken
 They would prick out my sight. A price is set

On this poor head ; but I believe there lives
 No man who truly loves and truly rules
 His following, but can keep his followers true.
 I am one with mine. Traitors are rarely bred
 Save under traitor kings. Our vice-king John,
 True king of vice—true play on words—our John
 By his Norman arrogance and dissoluteness,
 Hath made *me* king of all the discontent
 Of England up thro' all the forest land
 North to the Tyne : being outlaw'd in a land
 Where law lies dead, we make ourselves the law.
 Why break you thus upon my lonely hour ?

Enter LITTLE JOHN *and* KATE

Little John. I found this white doe wandering thro' the wood,
 Not thine, but mine. I have shot her thro' the heart.

Kate. He lies, my lord. I have shot *him* thro' the heart.

Robin. My God, thou art the very woman who waits
 On my dear Marian. Tell me, tell me of her.

Thou comest a very angel out of heaven.
 Where is she ? and how fares she ?

Kate. O my good lord,
 I am but an angel by reflected light.
 Your heaven is vacant of your angel.
 John—

Shame on him !—
 Stole on her, she was walking in the garden,
 And after some slight speech about the Sheriff
 He caught her round the waist, whereon she struck him,
 And fled into the castle. She and Sir Richard
 Have past away, I know not where ;
 and I

Was left alone, and knowing as I did
That I had shot him thro' the heart, I
came

To eat him up and make an end of him.

Little John. In kisses?

Kate. You, how dare you mention
kisses?

But I am weary pacing thro' the wood.
Show me some cave or cabin where I
may rest.

Robin. Go with him. I will talk
with thee anon.

[*Exeunt Little John and Kate.*

She struck him, my brave Marian, struck
the Prince,

The serpent that had crept into the
garden

And coil'd himself about her sacred
waist.

I think I should have stricken him to
the death.

He never will forgive her.

O the Sheriff

Would pay this cursed mortgage to his
brother

If Marian would marry him; and the son
Is most like dead—if so the land may
come

To Marian, and they rate the land five-
fold

The worth of the mortgage, and who
marries her

Marries the land. Most honourable
Sheriff!

(*Passionately*) Gone, and it may be gone
for evermore!

O would that I could see her for a
moment

Glide like a light across these woodland
ways!

Tho' in one moment she should glance
away,

I should be happier for it all the year.

O would she moved beside me like my
shadow!

O would she stood before me as my
queen,

To make this Sherwood Eden o'er again,
And these rough oaks the palms of
Paradise!

Ah! but who be those three yonder
with bows?—not of my band—the
Sheriff, and by heaven, Prince John
himself and one of those mercenaries
that suck the blood of England. My
people are all scattered I know not
where. Have they come for me? Here
is the witch's hut. The fool-people call
her a witch—a good witch to me! I
will shelter here.

[*Knocks at the door of the hut.*

OLD WOMAN *comes out*

Old Woman (*kisses his hand*). Ah
dear Robin! ah noble captain, friend of
the poor!

Robin. I am chased by my foes. I
have forgotten my horn that calls my
men together. Disguise me—thy gown
and thy coif.

Old Woman. Come in, come in; I
would give my life for thee, for when
the Sheriff had taken all our goods for
the King without paying, our horse and
our little cart——

Robin. Quick, good mother, quick!

Old Woman. Ay, ay, gown, coif, and
petticoat, and the old woman's blessing
with them to the last fringe.

[*They go in.*

*Enter PRINCE JOHN, SHERIFF OF
NOTTINGHAM, and MERCENARY*

Prince John. Did we not hear the
two would pass this way?

They must have past. Here is a wood-
man's hut.

Mercenary. Take heed, take heed! in
Nottingham they say

There bides a foul witch somewhere
hereabout.

Sheriff. Not in this hut I take it.

Prince John. Why not here?

Sheriff. I saw a man go in, my lord.

Prince John. Not two?

Sheriff. No, my lord, one.

Prince John. Make for the cottage
then!

Interior of the hut

ROBIN *disguised as old woman*

Prince John (without). Knock again !
knock again !

Robin (to Old Woman). Get thee into the closet there, and make a ghostly wail ever and anon to scare 'em.

Old Woman. I will, I will, good Robin.
[*Goes into closet.*]

Prince John (without). Open, open, or I will drive the door from the door-post.

Robin (opens door). Come in, come in.

Prince John. Why did ye keep us at the door so long ?

Robin (curtseying). I was afraid it was the ghost, your worship.

Prince John. Ghost ! did one in white pass ?

Robin (curtseying). No, your worship.

Prince John. Did two knights pass ?

Robin (curtseying). No, your worship.

Sheriff. I fear me we have lost our labour, then.

Prince John. Except this old hag have been bribed to lie.

Robin. We old hags should be bribed to speak truth, for, God help us, we lie by nature.

Prince John. There was a man just now that enter'd here ?

Robin. There is but one old woman in the hut.

[*Old Woman yells.*]

Robin. I crave your worship's pardon. There is yet another old woman. She was murdered here a hundred year ago, and whenever a murder is to be done again she yells out i' this way—so they say, your worship.

Mercenary. Now, if I hadn't a sprig o' wickentree sewn into my dress, I should run.

Prince John. Tut ! tut ! the scream of some wild woodland thing.

How came we to be parted from our men ?

We shouted, and *they* shouted, as I thought,

But shout and echo play'd into each other

So hollowly we knew not which was which.

Robin. The wood is full of echoes, owls, elfs, ouphes, oafs, ghosts o' the mist, wills-o'-the-wisp ; only they that be bred in it can find their way a-nights in it.

Prince John. I am footsore and famish'd therewithal.

Is there aught there ?

[*Pointing to cupboard.*]

Robin. Naught for the likes o' you.

Prince John. Speak straight out, crookback.

Robin. Sour milk and black bread.

Prince John. Well, set them forth.

I could eat anything.

[*He sets out a table with black bread.*]

This is mere marble. Old hag, how should thy one tooth drill thro' this ?

Robin. Nay, by St. Gemini, I ha' two ; and since the Sheriff left me naught but an empty belly, they can meet upon anything thro' a millstone. You gentles that live upo' manchet-bread and marchpane, what should you know o' the food o' the poor ? Look you here, before you can eat it you must hack it with a hatchet, break it all to pieces, as you break the poor, as you would hack at Robin Hood if you could light upon him (*hacks it and flings two pieces*). There's for you, and there's for you—and the old woman's welcome.

Prince John. The old wretch is mad, and her bread is beyond me : and the milk—faugh ! Hast thou anything to sweeten this ?

Robin. Here's a pot o' wild honey from an old oak, saving your sweet reverences.

Sheriff. Thou hast a cow then, hast thou ?

Robin. Ay, for when the Sheriff took my little horse for the King without paying for it—

Sheriff. How hadst thou then the means to buy a cow ?

Robin. Eh, I would ha' given my

whole body to the King had *he* asked for it, like the woman at Acre when the Turk shot her as she was helping to build the mound against the city. I ha' served the King living, says she, and let me serve him dead, says she; let me go to make the mound: bury me in the mound, says the woman.

Sheriff. Ay, but the cow?

Robin. She was given me.

Sheriff. By whom?

Robin. By a thief.

Sheriff. Who, woman, who?

Robin (sings).

He was a forester good;

He was the cock o' the walk;

He was the king o' the wood.

Your worship may find another rhyme if you care to drag your brains for such a minnow.

Sheriff. That cow was mine. I have lost a cow from my meadow. Robin Hood was it? I thought as much. He will come to the gibbet at last.

[*Old Woman yells.*]

Mercenary. O sweet sir, talk not of cows. You anger the spirit.

Prince John. Anger the scritch-owl.

Mercenary. But, my lord, the scritch-owl hodes death, my lord.

Robin. I beseech you all to speak lower. Robin may be hard by wi' three-score of his men. He often looks in here by the moonshine. Beware of Robin.

[*Old Woman yells.*]

Mercenary. Ay, do you hear? There may be murder done.

Sheriff. Have you not finished, my lord?

Robin. Thou hast crost him in love, and I have heard him swear he will be even wi' thee.

[*Old Woman yells.*]

Mercenary. Now is my heart so down in my heels that if I stay, I can't run.

Sheriff. Shall we not go?

Robin. And, old hag tho' I be, I can spell the hand. Give me thine. Ay, ay, the line o' life is marked enow; but look, there is a cross line o' sudden

death. I pray thee go, go, for tho' thou wouldst bar me fro' the milk o' my cow, I wouldn't have thy blood on my hearth.

Prince John. Why do you listen, man, to the old fool?

Sheriff. I will give thee a silver penny if thou wilt show us the way back to Nottingham.

Robin (with a very low curtsey). All the sweet saints bless your worship for your alms to the old woman! but make haste then, and be silent in the wood. Follow me.

[*Takes his bow.*]

(*They come out of the hut and close the door carefully*)

Outside hut

Robin. Softly! softly! there may be a thief in every bush.

Prince John. How should this old lamester guide us? Where is thy good-man?

Robin. The saints were so kind to both on us that he was dead before he was born.

Prince John. Half-witted and a witch to boot! Mislead us, and I will have thy life! and what doest thou with that who art more bow-bent than the very bow thou carriest?

Robin. I keep it to kill nightingales.

Prince John. Nightingales!

Robin. You see, they are so fond o' their own voices that I cannot sleep o' nights by cause on 'em.

Prince John. True soul of the Saxon churl for whom song has no charm.

Robin. Then I roast 'em, for I have nought else to live on (*whines*). O your honour, I pray you too to give me an alms. (*To Prince John.*)

Sheriff. This is no bow to hit nightingales; this is a true woodman's bow of the best yew-wood to slay the deer. Look, my lord, there goes one in the moonlight. Shoot!

Prince John (shoots). Missed! There goes another. Shoot, Sheriff!

Sheriff (shoots). Missed!

Robin. And here comes another. Why, an old woman can shoot closer than you two.

Prince John. Shoot then, and if thou miss I will fasten thee to thine own door-post and make thine old carcase a target for us three.

-Robin (raises himself upright, shoots, and hits). Hit! Did I not tell you an old woman could shoot better?

Prince John. Thou standest straight. Thou speakest manlike. Thou art no old woman—thou art disguised—thou art one of the thieves.

[Makes a clutch at the gown, which comes in pieces and falls, showing Robin in his forester's dress.

Sheriff. It is the very captain of the thieves!

Prince John. We have him at last; we have him at advantage. Strike, Sheriff! Strike, mercenary!

[They draw swords and attack him; he defends himself with his.

Enter LITTLE JOHN

Little John. I have lodged my pretty Katekin in her bower.

How now? Clashing of swords—three upon one, and that one our Robin! Rogues, have you no manhood?

[Draws and defends Robin.

Enter SIR RICHARD LEA (draws his sword)

Sir Richard Lea. Old as I am, I will not brook to see

Three upon two.

[Maid Marian in the armour of a Red-cross Knight follows, half unsheathing her sword and half-seen.

Back! back! I charge thee, back! Is this a game for thee to play at? Away.

[She retires to the fringe of the copse. He fights on Robin's side. The other three are beaten off and exeunt.

Enter FRIAR TUCK

Friar Tuck. I am too late then with my quarterstaff!

Robin. Quick, friar, follow them: See whether there be more of 'em in the wood.

Friar Tuck. On the gallop, on the gallop, Robin, like a deer from a dog, or a colt from a gad-fly, or a stump-tailed ox in May-time, or the cow that jumped over the moon. *[Exit.*

Robin. Nay, nay, but softly, lest they spy thee, friar!

[To Sir Richard Lea who reels. Take thou mine arm. Who art thou, gallant knight?

Sir Richard. Robin, I am Sir Richard of the Lea.

Who be those three that I have fought withal?

Robin. Prince John, the Sheriff, and a mercenary.

Sir Richard. Prince John again. We are flying from this John.

The Sheriff—I am grieved it was the Sheriff;

For, Robin, he must be my son-in-law. Thou art an outlaw, and couldst never pay

The mortgage on my land. Thou wilt not see

My Marian more. So—so—I have presumed

Beyond my strength. Give me a draught of wine.

[Marian comes forward.

This is my son but late escaped from prison,

For whom I ran into my debt to the Abbot,

Two thousand marks in gold. I have paid him half.

That other thousand—shall I ever pay it? A draught of wine.

Robin. Our cellar is hard by. Take him, good Little John, and give him wine.

[Exit Sir Richard leaning on Little John. A brave old fellow but he angers me.

[To Maid Marian who is following her father.

Young Walter, nay, I pray thee, stay a moment,

Marian. A moment for some matter
of no moment !
Well—take and use your moment, while
you may.

Robin. Thou art her brother, and her
voice is thine,
Her face is thine, and if thou be as gentle
Give me some news of my sweet Marian.
Where is she ?

Marian. Thy sweet Marian ? I
believe
She came with me into the forest here.

Robin. She follow'd thee into the
forest here ?

Marian. Nay—that, my friend, I
am sure I did not say.

Robin. Thou blowest hot and cold.
Where is she then ?

Marian. Is she not here with thee ?

Robin. Would God she were !

Marian. If not with thee I know not
where she is.

She may have lighted on your fairies here,
And now be skipping in their fairy-rings,
And capering hand in hand with Oberon.

Robin. Peace !

Marian. Or learning witchcraft of
your woodland witch,
And how to charm and waste the hearts
of men.

Robin. That is not brother-like.

Marian (*pointing to the sky*). Or
there perchance

Up yonder with the man i' the moon.

Robin. No more !

Marian. Or haply fallen a victim to
the wolf.

Robin. Tut ! be there wolves in
Sherwood ?

Marian. The wolf, John !

Robin. Curse him ! but thou art
mocking me. Thou art

Her brother—I forgive thee. Come be
thou

My brother too. She loves me.

Marian. Doth she so ?

Robin. Do you doubt me when I say
she loves me, man ?

Marian. No, but my father will not
lose his land,

Rather than that would wed her with the
Sheriff.

Robin. Thou hold'st with him ?

Marian. Yes, in some sort I do.
He is old and almost mad to keep the
land.

Robin. Thou hold'st with him ?

Marian. I tell thee, in some sort.

Robin (*angrily*). Sort ! sort ! what
sort ? what sort of man art thou
For land, not love ? Thou wilt inherit
the land,

And so wouldst sell thy sister to the
Sheriff,

O thou unworthy brother of my dear
Marian !

And now, I do bethink me, thou wast by
And never drewest sword to help the old
man

When he was fighting.

Marian. There were three to three.

Robin. Thou shouldst have ta'en his
place, and fought for him.

Marian. He did it so well there was
no call for me.

Robin. My God !

That such a brother—*she* marry the
Sheriff !

Come now, I fain would have a bout
with thee.

It is but pastime—nay, I will not harm
thee.

Draw !

Marian. Earl, I would fight with
any man but thee.

Robin. Ay, ay, because I have a
name for prowess.

Marian. It is not that.

Robin. That ! I believe thou fell'st
into the hands

Of these same Moors thro' nature's base-
ness, criedst

'I yield' almost before the thing was
ask'd,

And thro' thy lack of manhood hast
betray'd

Thy father to the losing of his land.

Come, boy ! 'tis but to see if thou canst
fence.

Draw !

[*Draws.*

Marian. No, Sir Earl, I will not fight to-day.

Robin. To-morrow then?

Marian. Well, I will fight to-morrow.

Robin. Give me thy glove upon it.

Marian (*pulls off her glove and gives it to him*). There!

Robin. O God!

What sparkles in the moonlight on thy hand? [*Takes her hand.*

In that great heat to wed her to the Sheriff

Thou hast robb'd my girl of her betrothal ring.

Marian. No, no!

Robin. What! do I not know mine own ring?

Marian. I keep it for her.

Robin. Nay, she swore it never should leave her finger. Give it me, by heaven,

Or I will force it from thee.

Marian. O Robin, Robin!

Robin. O my dear Marian, Is it thou? is it thou? I fall before thee, clasp

Thy knees. I am ashamed. Thou shalt not marry

The Sheriff, but abide with me who love thee.

[*She moves from him, the moonlight falls upon her.*

O look! before the shadow of these dark oaks

Thou seem'st a saintly splendour out from heaven,

Clothed with the mystic silver of her moon.

Speak but one word not only of forgiveness,

But to show thou art mortal.

Marian. Mortal enough, If love for thee be mortal. Lovers hold

True love immortal. Robin, tho' I love thee,

We cannot come together in this world. Not mortal! after death, if after death——

Robin (*springing up*). Life, life. I know not death. Why do you vex me

With raven-croaks of death and after death?

Marian. And I and he are passing overseas:

He has a friend there will advance the monies,

So now the forest lawns are all as bright

As ways to heaven, I pray thee give us guides

To lead us thro' the windings of the wood.

Robin. Must it be so? If it were so, myself

Would guide you thro' the forest to the sea.

But go not yet, stay with us, and when thy brother——

Marian. Robin, I ever held that saying false

That Love is blind, but thou hast proven it true.

Why—even your woodland squirrel sees the nut

Behind the shell, and thee however mask'd

I should have known. But thou—to dream that he

My brother, my dear Walter—now, perhaps,

Fetter'd and lash'd, a galley-slave, or closed

For ever in a Moorish tower, or wreckt And dead beneath the midland ocean,

As gentle as he's brave—that such as he Would wrest from me the precious ring

I promised

Never to part with—No, not he, nor any.

I would have battled for it to the death.

[*In her excitement she draws her sword.*

See, thou hast wrong'd my brother and myself.

Robin (*kneeling*). See then, I kneel once more to be forgiven.

Enter SCARLET, MUCH, several of the FORESTERS, rushing on

Scarlet. Look ! look ! he kneels ! he has anger'd the foul witch,
Who melts a waxen image by the fire,
And drains the heart and marrow from a man.

Much. Our Robin beaten, pleading for his life !
Seize on the knight ! wrench his sword from him !

[They all rush on Marian.

Robin (springing up and waving his hand). Back !

Back all of you ! this is Maid Marian
Flying from John—disguised.

Men. Maid Marian ? she ?

Scarlet. Captain, we saw thee cowering to a knight
And thought thou wert bewitch'd.

Marian. You dared to dream
That our great Earl, the bravest English heart

Since Hereward the Wake, would cower to any

Of mortal build. Weak natures that impute

Themselves to their unlikes, and their own want

Of manhood to their leader ! he would break,

Far as he might, the power of John—but you—

What rightful cause could grow to such a heat

As burns a wrong to ashes, if the followers
Of him, who heads the movement, held him craven ?

Robin—I know not, can I trust myself
With your brave band ? in some of these may lodge—

That baseness which for fear or monies, might

Betray me to the wild Prince.

Robin. No, love, no !
Not any of these, I swear.

Men. No, no, we swear.

SCENE II. — ANOTHER GLADE IN THE FOREST

ROBIN and MARIAN passing

Enter FORESTER

Forester. Knight, your good father had his draught of wine
And then he swoon'd away. He had been hurt,
And bled beneath his armour. Now he cries

'The land ! the land !' Come to him.

Marian. O my poor father !

Robin. Stay with us in this wood, till he recover.

We know all balms and simples of the field

To help a wound. Stay with us here, sweet love,

Maid Marian, till thou wed what man thou wilt.

All here will prize thee, honour, worship thee,

Crown thee with flowers ; and he will soon be well :

All will be well.

Marian. O lead me to my father !

[As they are going out enter Little John and Kate who falls on the neck of Marian.

Kate. No, no, false knight, thou canst not hide thyself

From her who loves thee.

Little John. What !

By all the devils in and out of Hell !

Wilt thou embrace thy sweetheart 'fore my face ?

Quick with thy sword ! the yeoman braves the knight.

There ! *(strikes her with the flat of his sword).*

Marian (laying about her). Are the men all mad ? there then, and there !

Kate. O hold thy hand ! this is our Marian.

Little John. What ! with this skill of fence ! let go mine arm.

Robin. Down with thy sword ! She
is my queen and thine,
The mistress of the band.

Marian (sheathing her sword). A
maiden now
Were ill-bested in these dark days of
John,
Except she could defend her innocence.
O lead me to my father.

[*Exeunt Robin and Marian.*]

Little John. Speak to me,
I am like a boy now going to be whipt ;
I know I have done amiss, have been a
fool.

Speak to me, Kate, and say you pardon
me !

Kate. I never will speak word to
thee again.
What ? to mistrust the girl you say you
love
Is to mistrust your own love for your girl !
How should you love if you mistrust your
love ?

Little John. O Kate, true love and
jealousy are twins,
And love is joyful, innocent, beautiful,
And jealousy is wither'd, sour and ugly :
Yet are they twins and always go together.

Kate. Well, well, until they cease to
go together,
I am but a stone and a dead stock to
thee.

Little John. I thought I saw thee
clasp and kiss a man
And it was but a woman. Pardon me.

Kate. Ay, for I much disdain thee,
but if ever
Thou see me clasp and kiss a man indeed,
I will again be thine, and not till then.

[*Exit.*]

Little John. I have been a fool and
I have lost my Kate. [*Exit.*]

Re-enter ROBIN

Robin. He dozes. I have left her
watching him.
She will not marry till her father yield.
The old man dotes.
Nay—and she will not marry till Richard
come,

And that's at latter Lammas—never
perhaps.

Besides, tho' Friar Tuck might make us
one,

An outlaw's bride may not be wife in
law.

I am weary. [*Lying down on a bank.*]
What's here ? a dead bat in the fairy
ring—

Yes, I remember, Scarlet hacking down
A hollow ash, a bat flew out at him
In the clear noon, and hook'd him by
the hair,

And he was scared and slew it. My
men say

The fairies haunt this glade ;—if one
could catch

A glimpse of them and of their fairy
Queen—

Have our loud pastimes driven them all
away ?

I never saw them : yet I could believe
There came some evil fairy at my birth
And cursed me, as the last heir of my
race :

'This boy will never wed the maid he
loves,

Nor leave a child behind him' (*yawns*).

Weary—weary

As tho' a spell were on me (*he dreams*).

[*The whole stage lights up, and fairies
are seen swinging on boughs and
nestling in hollow trunks.*]

TITANIA on a hill, FAIRIES on either
side of her, the moon above the hill

First Fairy

Evil fairy ! do you hear ?

So he said who lieth here.

Second Fairy

We be fairies of the wood,
We be neither bad nor good.

First Fairy

Back and side and hip and rib,
Nip, nip him for his fib.

Titania

Nip him not, but let him snore.
We must flit for evermore.

First Fairy

Tit, my queen, must it be so?
Wherefore, wherefore should we go?

Titania

I Titania bid you flit,
And you dare to call me Tit.

First Fairy

Tit, for love and brevity,
Not for love of levity.

Titania

Pertest of our flickering mob,
Wouldst thou call my Oberon Ob?

First Fairy

Nay, an please your Elfin Grace,
Never Ob before his face.

Titania

Fairy realm is breaking down
When the fairy slights the crown.

First Fairy

No, by wisp and glowworm, no.
Only wherefore should we go?

Titania

We must fly from Robin Hood
And this new queen of the wood.

First Fairy

True, she is a goodly thing.
Jealousy, jealousy of the king.

Titania

Nay, for Oberon fled away
Twenty thousand leagues to-day.

Chorus

Look, there comes a deputation
From our finikin fairy nation.

*Enter several FAIRIES**Third Fairy*

Crush'd my bat whereon I flew!
Found him dead and drench'd in dew,
Queen.

Fourth Fairy

Quash'd my frog that used to quack
When I vaulted on his back,
Queen.

Fifth Fairy

Kill'd the sward where'er they sat,
Queen.

Sixth Fairy

Lusty bracken beaten flat,
Queen.

Seventh Fairy

Honest daisy deadly bruised,
Queen.

Eighth Fairy

Modest maiden lily abused,
Queen.

Ninth Fairy

Beetle's jewel armour crack'd,
Queen.

Tenth Fairy

Reed I rock'd upon broken-back'd,
Queen.

Fairies (in chorus)

We be scared with song and shout.
Arrows whistle all about.
All our games be put to rout.
All our rings be trampled out.
Lead us thou to some deep glen,
Far from solid foot of men,
Never to return again,
Queen.

Titania (to First Fairy)

Elf, with spiteful heart and eye,
Talk of jealousy? You see why
We must leave the wood and fly.

(*To all the Fairies, who sing at intervals
with Titania*)

Up with you, out of the forest and over
the hills and away,
And over this Robin Hood's bay!
Up thro' the light of the seas by the
moon's long-silvering ray!
To a land where the fay,
Not an eye to survey,
In the night, in the day,
Can have frolic and play.
Up with you, all of you, out of it! hear
and obey.
Man, lying here alone,
Moody creature,

Of a nature
Stronger, sadder than my own,
Were I human, were I human,
I could love you like a woman.
Man, man,
You shall wed your Marian.
She is true, and you are true,
And you love her and she loves you ;
Both be happy, and adieu for ever and
for evermore—adieu.

Robin (half waking). Shall I be
happy? Happy vision, stay.

Titania

Up with you, all of you, off with you,
out of it, over the wood and away !

Note.—In the stage copy of my play I have had
this Fairy Scene transferred to the end of the
Third Act, for the sake of modern dramatic
effect.

ACT III

THE CROWNING OF MARIAN

SCENE.—HEART OF THE FOREST

MARIAN and KATE (*in Foresters' green*)

Kate. What makes you seem so cold
to Robin, lady?

Marian. What makes thee think I
seem so cold to Robin?

Kate. You never whisper close as
lovers do,

Nor care to leap into each other's arms.

Marian. There is a fence I cannot
overleap,
My father's will.

Kate. Then you will wed the Sheriff?

Marian. When heaven falls, I may
light on such a lark !

But who art thou to catechize me—thou
That hast not made it up with Little
John !

Kate. I wait till Little John makes
up to me.

Marian. Why, my good Robin
fancied me a man,
And drew his sword upon me, and Little
John

Fancied he saw thee clasp and kiss a
man.

Kate. Well, if *he* fancied that *I* fancy
a man

Other than *him*, he is *not* the man for
me.

Marian. And that would quite *unman*
him, heart and soul.

For both are thine. (*Looking up.*)

But listen—overhead—

Fluting, and piping and luting 'Love,
love, love'—

Those sweet tree-Cupids half-way up in
heaven,

The birds—would I were one of 'em !

O good Kate—

If my man-Robin were but a bird-Robin,
How happily would we lilt among the
leaves

'Love, love, love, love'—what merry
madness—listen !

And let them warm thy heart to Little
John.

Look where he comes !

Kate. I will not meet him yet,
I'll watch him from behind the trees,
but call

Kate when you will, for I am close at
hand.

KATE *stands aside and enter* ROBIN, *and*
after him at a little distance LITTLE
JOHN, MUCH *the Miller's son*, and
SCARLET *with an oaken chaplet, and*
other FORESTERS.

Little John. My lord—Robin—I
crave pardon—you always seem to me
my lord—I Little John, he Much the
miller's son, and he Scarlet, honouring
all womankind, and more especially my
lady Marian, do here, in the name of all
our woodmen, present her with this
oaken chaplet as Queen of the wood, I
Little John, he, young Scarlet, and he,
old Much, and all the rest of us.

Much. And I, old Much, say as
much, for being every inch a man I
honour every inch of a woman.

Robin. Friend Scarlet, art thou less
a man than Much?

Why art thou mute? Dost thou not honour woman?

Scarlet. Robin, I do, but I have a bad wife.

Robin. Then let her pass as an exception, Scarlet.

Scarlet. So I would, Robin, if any man would accept her.

Marian (puts on the chaplet). Had I a bulrush now in this right hand For sceptre, I were like a queen indeed. Comrades, I thank you for your loyalty, And take and wear this symbol of your love;

And were my kindly father sound again,
Could live as happy as the larks in heaven,

And join your feasts and all your forest games

As far as maiden might. Farewell,
good fellows!

[*Exeunt several Foresters, the others withdraw to the back.*]

Robin. Sit here by me, where the most beaten track
Runs thro' the forest, hundreds of huge oaks,

Gnarl'd—older than the thrones of Europe—look,

What breadth, height, strength—torrents of eddying bark!

Some hollow-hearted from exceeding age—

That never be thy lot or mine!—and some

Pillaring a leaf-sky on their monstrous boles,

Sound at the core as we are. Fifty leagues

Of woodland hear and know my horn,
that scares

The Baron at the torture of his churls,
The pillage of his vassals.

O maiden-wife,
The oppression of our people moves me so,

That when I think of it hotly, Love himself

Seems but a ghost, but when thou feel'st with me

The ghost returns to Marian, clothes itself

In maiden flesh and blood, and looks at once

Maid Marian, and that maiden freedom which

Would never brook the tyrant. Live thou maiden!

Thou art more my wife so feeling, than if my wife

And siding with these proud priests, and these Barons,

Devils, that make this blessed England hell.

Marian. Earl——

Robin. Nay, no Earl am I. I am English yeoman.

Marian. Then I am yeo-woman.
O the clumsy word!

Robin. Take thou this light kiss for thy clumsy word.

Kiss me again.

Marian. Robin, I will not kiss thee,
For that belongs to marriage; but I hold thee

The husband of my heart, the noblest light

That ever flash'd across my life, and I Embrace thee with the kisses of the soul.

Robin. I thank thee.

Marian. Scarlet told me—is it true?—

That John last week return'd to Nottingham,

And all the foolish world is pressing thither.

Robin. Sit here, my queen, and judge the world with me.

Doubtless, like judges of another bench,
However wise, we must at times have wrought

Some great injustice, yet, far as we knew,
We never robb'd one friend of the true King.

We robb'd the traitors that are leagued with John;

We robb'd the lawyer who went against the law;

We spared the craftsman, chapman, all that live

By their own hands, the labourer, the poor priest ;

We spoil'd the prior, friar, abbot, monk,
For playing upside down with Holy Writ.
'Sell all thou hast and give it to the poor' ;

Take all they have and give it to thyself !
Then after we have eased them of their coins

It is our forest custom they should revel
Along with Robin.

Marian. And if a woman pass——

Robin. Dear, in these days of Norman license, when
Our English maidens are their prey, if ever

A Norman damsel fell into our hands,
In this dark wood when all was in our power

We never wrong'd a woman.

Marian. Noble Robin.

Little John (coming forward). Here come three beggars.

Enter the three BEGGARS

Little John. Toll !

First Beggar. Eh ! we be beggars, we come to ask o' you. We ha' nothing.

Second Beggar. Rags, nothing but our rags.

Third Beggar. I have but one penny in pouch, and so you would make it two I should be grateful.

Marian. Beggars, you are sturdy rogues that should be set to work. You are those that tramp the country, filch the linen from the hawthorn, poison the house-dog, and scare lonely maidens at the farmstead. Search them, Little John.

Little John. These two have forty gold marks between them, Robin.

Robin. Cast them into our treasury, the beggars' mites. Part shall go to the almshouses at Nottingham, part to the shrine of our Lady. Search this other.

Little John. He hath, as he said, but one penny.

Robin. Leave it with him and add a gold mark thereto. He hath spoken truth in a world of lies.

Third Beggar. I thank you, my lord.

Little John. A fine, a fine ! he hath called plain Robin a lord. How much for a beggar ?

Robin. Take his penny and leave him his gold mark.

Little John. Sit there, knaves, till the captain call for you.

[*They pass behind the trunk of an oak on the right.*]

Marian. Art thou not hard upon them, my good Robin ?

Robin. They might be harder upon thee, if met in a black lane at midnight : the throat might gape before the tongue could cry who ?

Little John. Here comes a citizen, and I think his wife.

Enter CITIZEN and WIFE

Citizen. That business which we have in Nottingham——

Little John. Halt !

Citizen. O dear wife, we have fallen into the hands
Of Robin Hood.

Marian. And Robin Hood hath sworn——
Shame on thee, Little John, thou hast forgotten——

That by the blessed Mother no man, so
His own true wife came with him, should be stay'd

From passing onward. Fare you well,
fair lady ! [*Bowing to her.*]

Robin. And may your business thrive in Nottingham !

Citizen. I thank you, noble sir, the very blossom
Of bandits. Curtsey to him, wife, and thank him.

Wife. I thank you, noble sir, and will pray for you
That you may thrive, but in some kindlier trade.

Citizen. Away, away, wife, wilt thou anger him ?

[*Exeunt Citizen and his Wife.*]

Little John. Here come three friars.

Robin. Marian, thou and thy woman
(*looking round*),

Why, where is Kate?

Marian (calling). Kate?

Kate. Here!

Robin. Thou and thy woman are a
match for three friars. Take thou my
bow and arrow and compel them to pay
toll.

Marian. Toll!

Enter three FRIARS

First Friar (advancing). Behold a
pretty Dian of the wood,
Prettier than that same widow which you
wot of.

Ha, brother. Toll, my dear? the toll
of love.

Marian (drawing bow). Back! how
much money hast thou in thy
purse?

First Friar. Thou art playing with
us. How should poor friars have money?

Marian. How much? how much?
Speak, or the arrow flies.

First Friar. How much? well, now
I bethink me, I have one mark in gold
which a pious son of the Church gave
me this morning on my setting forth.

Marian (bending bow at the second).
And thou?

Second Friar. Well, as he said, one
mark in gold.

Marian (bending bow at the third).
And thou?

Third Friar. One mark in gold.

Marian. Search them, Kate, and see
if they have spoken truth.

Kate. They are all mark'd men.
They have told but a tenth of the truth:
they have each ten marks in gold.

Marian. Leave them each what they
say is theirs, and take the twenty-seven
marks to the captain's treasury. Sit
there till you be called for.

First Friar. We have fall'n into the
hands of Robin Hood.

[*Marian and Kate return to Robin.*

[*The Friars pass behind an oak on
the left.*

Robin. Honour to thee, brave
Marian, and thy Kate.

I know them arrant knaves in
Nottingham.

One half of this shall go to those they
have wrong'd,

One half shall pass into our treasury.

Where lies that cask of wine whereof we
plunder'd

The Norman prelate?

Little John. In that oak, where twelve
Can stand upright, nor touch each other.

Robin. Good!
Roll it in here. These friars, thieves,
and liars,

Shall drink the health of our new wood-
land Queen.

And they shall pledge thee, Marian,
loud enough

To fright the wild hawk passing overhead,
The mouldwarp underfoot.

Marian. They pledge me, Robin?
The silent blessing of one honest man
Is heard in heaven—the wassail yells of
thief

And rogue and liar echo down in Hell,
And wake the Devil, and I may sicken
by 'em.

Well, well, be it so, thou strongest thief
of all,

For thou hast stolen my will, and made
it thine.

FRIAR TUCK, LITTLE JOHN, MUCH,
and SCARLET roll in cask

Friar Tuck. I marvel is it sack or
Malvoisie?

Robin. Do me the service to tap it,
and thou wilt know.

Friar Tuck. I would tap myself in
thy service, Robin.

Robin. And thou wouldst run more
wine than blood.

Friar Tuck. And both at thy service,
Robin.

Robin. I believe thee, thou art a
good fellow, though a friar.

[*They pour the wine into cups.*

Friar Tuck. Fill to the brim. Our
Robin, King o' the woods,

Wherever the horn sound, and the buck
bound,

Robin, the people's friend, the King o'
the woods ! *[They drink.]*

Robin. To the brim and over till the
green earth drink

Her health along with us in this rich
draught,

And answer it in flowers. The Queen
o' the woods,

Wherever the buck bound, and the horn
sound,

Maid Marian, Queen o' the woods !
[They drink.]

Here, you three rogues,
[To the Beggars. They come out.]

You caught a lonely woodman of our
band,

And bruised him almost to the death,
and took

His monies.

Third Beggar. Captain, nay, it wasn't
me.

Robin. You ought to dangle up there
among the crows.

Drink to the health of our new Queen o'
the woods,

Or else be bound and beaten.

First Beggar. Sir, sir—well,
We drink the health of thy new Queen
o' the woods.

Robin. Louder ! louder ! Maid
Marian, Queen o' the woods !

Beggars (shouting). Maid Marian,
Queen o' the woods : Queen o'
the woods !

First and Second Beggars (aside). The
black fiend grip her !

[They drink.]

Robin (to the Friars). And you three
holy men, *[They come out.]*

You worshippers of the Virgin, one of
you

Shamed a too trustful widow whom you
heard

In her confession ; and another—worse !—
An innocent maid. Drink to the Queen

o' the woods,

Or else be bound and beaten.

First Friar. Robin Hood,
These be the lies the people tell of us,
Because we seek to curb their viciousness.
However—to this maid, this Queen o'
the woods.

Robin. Louder, louder, ye knaves.
Maid Marian !
Queen o' the woods !

Friars (shouting). Maid Marian,
Queen o' the woods.

First Friar (aside). Maid ?

Second Friar (aside). Paramour !

Third Friar (aside). Hell take her !
[They drink.]

Friar Tuck. Robin, will you not
hear one of these beggars' catches ?
They can do it. I have heard 'em in
the market at Mansfield.

Little John. No, my lord, hear ours
—Robin—I crave pardon, I always
think of you as my lord, but I may still
say my lady ; and, my lady, Kate and I
have fallen out again, and I pray you to
come between us again, for, my lady,
we have made a song in your honour, so
your ladyship care to listen.

Robin. Sing, and by St. Mary these
beggars and these friars shall join you.
Play the air, Little John.

Little John. Air and word, my lady,
are maid and man. Join them and they
are a true marriage ; and so, I pray you,
my lady, come between me and my Kate
and make us one again. Scarlet, begin.
[Playing the air on his viol.]

Scarlet

By all the deer that spring

Thro' wood and lawn and ling,

When all the leaves are green ;

By arrow and gray goosewing,

When horn and echo ring,

We care so much for a King ;

We care not much for a Queen—

For a Queen, for a Queen o' the woods.

Marian. Do you call that in my
honour ?

Scarlet. Bitters before dinner, my
lady, to give you a relish. The first part
—made before you came among us—they

put it upon me because I have a bad wife. I love you all the same. Proceed.

[*All the rest sing.*]

By all the leaves of spring,
And all the birds that sing
When all the leaves are green;
By arrow and by bowstring,
We care so much for a King
That we would die for a Queen—
For a Queen, for a Queen o' the woods.

Enter FORESTER

Forester. Black news, black news
from Nottingham! I grieve
I am the Raven who croaks it. My
lord John,
In wrath because you drove him from
the forest,
Is coming with a swarm of mercenaries
To break our band and scatter us to the
winds.

Marian. O Robin, Robin! See
that men be set
Along the glades and passes of the wood
To warn us of his coming! then each
man

That owns a wife or daughter, let him
bury her

Even in the bowels of the earth to 'scape
The glance of John——

Robin. You hear your Queen, obey!

ACT IV

THE CONCLUSION

SCENE.—A FOREST BOWER, CAVERN
IN BACKGROUND. SUNRISE

Marian (rising to meet Robin). Robin,
the sweet light of a mother's eye,
That beam of dawn upon the opening
flower,

Has never glanced upon me when a child.
He was my father, mother, both in one.
The love that children owe to both I give
To him alone.

(*Robin offers to caress her*)

Marian. Quiet, good Robin, quiet!
You lovers are such clumsy summer-flies
For ever buzzing at your lady's face.

Robin. Bees rather, flying to the
flower for honey.

Marian (sings)

The bee buzz'd up in the heat.
'I am faint for your honey, my sweet.'
The flower said 'Take it, my dear,
For now is the spring of the year,
So come, come!'
'Hum!'

And the bee buzz'd down from the heat.

And the bee buzz'd up in the cold
When the flower was wither'd and old.
'Have you still any honey, my dear?'
She said 'It's the fall of the year,
But come, come!'
'Hum!'

And the bee buzz'd off in the cold.

Robin. Out on thy song!

Marian. Did I not sing it in tune?

Robin. No, sweetheart! out of tune
with Love and me.

Marian. And yet in tune with Nature
and the bees.

Robin. Out on it, I say, as out of tune
and time!

Marian. Till thou thyself shalt come
to sing it—in time.

*Robin (taking a tress of her hair in
his hand).* Time! if his back-
ward-working alchemy

Should change this gold to silver, why,
the silver

Were dear as gold, the wrinkle as the
dimple.

Thy bee should buzz about the Court of
John.

No ribald John is Love, no wanton Prince,
The ruler of an hour, but lawful King,
Whose writ will run thro' all the range of
life.

Out upon all hard-hearted maidenhood!

Marian. And out upon all simple
batchelors!

Ah, well! thou seest the land has come
between us,

And my sick father here has come between
us,

And this rich Sheriff too has come between
us;

So, is it not all over now between us?

Gone, like a deer that hath escaped thine arrow!

Robin. What deer when I have mark'd him ever yet

Escaped mine arrow? over is it? wilt thou

Give me thy hand on that?

Marian. Take it.

Robin (*kisses her hand*). The Sheriff! This ring cries out against thee. Say it again,

And by this ring the lips that never breathed

Love's falsehood to true maid will seal Love's truth

On those sweet lips that dare to dally with it.

Marian. Quiet, quiet! or I will to my father.

Robin. So, then, thy father will not grace our feast With his white beard to-day.

Marian. Being so sick

How should he, Robin?

Robin. Then that bond he hath

Of the Abbot—wilt thou ask him for it?

Marian. Why?

Robin. I have sent to the Abbot and justiciary To bring their counter-bond into the forest.

Marian. But will they come?

Robin. If not I have let them know Their lives unsafe in any of these our woods,

And in the winter I will fire their farms. But I have sworn by our Lady if they come

I will not tear the bond, but see fair play Betwixt them and Sir Richard—promised too,

So that they deal with us like honest men, They shall be handled with all courteousness.

Marian. What wilt thou do with the bond then?

Robin. Wait and see.

What wilt thou do with the Sheriff?

Marian. Wait and see.

I bring the bond. [*Exit Marian.*]

Enter LITTLE JOHN, FRIAR TUCK, and MUCH, and FORESTERS and PEASANTS *laughing and talking.*

Robin. Have ye glanced down thro' all the forest ways And mark'd if those two knaves from York be coming?

Little John. Not yet, but here comes one of bigger mould.

[*Enter* King Richard. Art thou a knight?

King Richard. I am.

Robin. And walkest here Unarmour'd? all these walks are Robin Hood's

And sometimes perilous.

King Richard. Good! but having lived

For twenty days and nights in mail, at last

I crawl'd like a sick crab from my old shell,

That I might breathe for a moment free of shield

And cuirass in this forest where I dream'd That all was peace—not even a Robin Hood—

(*Aside*) What if these knaves should know me for their King?

Robin. Art thou for Richard, or allied to John?

King Richard. I am allied to John.

Robin. The worse for thee.

King Richard. Art thou that banish'd lord of Huntingdon, The chief of these outlaws who break the law?

Robin. I am the yeoman, plain Robin Hood, and being out of the law how should we break the law? if we broke into it again we should break the law, and then we were no longer outlaws.

King Richard. But, Earl, if thou be he—

Friar Tuck. Fine him! fine him! he hath called plain Robin an earl. How much is it, Robin, for a knight?

Robin. A mark.

King Richard (*gives it*). There.

Robin. Thou payest easily, like a good fellow,
But being o' John's side we must have thy gold.

King Richard. But I am more for Richard than for John.

Robin. What, what, a truckler! a word-eating coward!
Nay, search him then. How much hast thou about thee?

King Richard. I had one mark.

Robin. What more.

King Richard. No more, I think.
But how then if I not bide to be search'd?

Robin. We are four to one.

King Richard. And I might deal with four.

Robin. Good, good, I love thee for that! but if I wind
This forest-horn of mine I can bring down
Fourscore tall fellows on thee.

King Richard. Search me then.
I should be hard beset with thy fourscore.

Little John (*searching King Richard*).
Robin, he hath no more. He hath spoken truth.

Robin. I am glad of it. Give him back his gold again.

King Richard. But I had liefer than this gold again—
Not having broken fast the livelong day—
Something to eat.

Robin. And thou shalt have it, man.
Our feast is yonder, spread beneath an oak,
Venison, and wild boar, hare, geese, besides

Hedge-pigs, a savoury viand, so thou be
Squeamish at eating the King's venison.

King Richard. Nay, Robin, I am like thyself in that
I look on the King's venison as my own.

Friar Tuck. Ay, ay, Robin, but let him know our forest laws: he that pays not for his dinner must fight for it. In the sweat of thy brow, says Holy Writ, shalt thou eat bread, but in the sweat of thy brow and thy breast, and thine arms,

and thy legs, and thy heart, and thy liver, and in the fear of thy life shalt thou eat the King's venison—ay, and so thou fight at quarterstaff for thy dinner with our Robin, that will give thee a new zest for it, though thou wert like a bottle full up to the cork, or as hollow as a kex, or the shambles-oak, or a weasel-sucked egg, or the head of a fool, or the heart of Prince John, or any other symbol of vacuity.

[*They bring out the quarterstuffs, and the Foresters and Peasants crowd round to see the games, and applaud at intervals.*]

King Richard. Great woodland king,
I know not quarterstaff.

Little John. A fine! a fine! He hath called plain Robin a king.

Robin. A shadow, a poetical fiction—did ye not call me king in your song?—a mere figure. Let it go by.

Friar Tuck. No figure, no fiction, Robin. What, is not man a hunting animal? And look you now, if we kill a stag, our dogs have their paws cut off, and the hunters, if caught, are blinded, or worse than blinded. Is that to be a king? If the king and the law work injustice, is not he that goes against the king and the law the true king in the sight of the King of kings? Thou art the king of the forest, and I would thou wert the king of the land.

King Richard. This friar is of much boldness, noble captain.

Robin. He hath got it from the bottle, noble knight.

Friar Tuck. Boldness out of the bottle! I defy thee.
Boldness is in the blood, Truth in the bottle.

She lay so long at the bottom of her well
In the cold water that she lost her voice,
And so she glided up into the heart
O' the bottle, the warm wine, and found it again.

In vino veritas. Shall I undertake
The knight at quarterstaff, or thou?

Robin. Peace, magpie!

Give him the quarterstaff. Nay, but thyself

Shalt play a bout with me, that he may see

The fashion of it.

[*Plays with Friar Tuck at quarterstaff.*

King Richard. Well, then, let me try. [*They play.*

I yield, I yield. I know no quarterstaff.

Robin. Then thou shalt play the game of buffets with us.

King Richard. What's that?

Robin. I stand up here, thou there. I give thee

A buffet, and thou me. The Holy Virgin

Stand by the strongest. I am over-breathed,

Friar, by my two bouts at quarterstaff.

Take him and try him, friar.

Friar Tuck. There! [*Strikes.*

Sir Richard (strikes). There!

[*Friar falls.*

Friar Tuck. There!

Thou hast roll'd over the Church militant

Like a tod of wool from wagon into warehouse.

Nay, I defy thee still. Try me an hour hence.

I am misty with my thimbleful of ale.

Robin. Thou seest, Sir Knight, our friar is so holy

That he's a miracle-monger, and can make

Five quarts pass into a thimble. Up, good Much.

Friar Tuck. And show thyself more of a man than me.

Much. Well, no man yet has ever bowl'd me down.

Scarlet. Ay, for old Much is every inch a man.

Robin. We should be all the more beholden to him.

Much. Much and more! much and more! I am the oldest of thy men, and thou and thy youngsters are always muching and moreing me.

Robin. Because thou art always so

much more of a man than my youngsters, old Much.

Much. Well, we Muches be old.

Robin. Old as the hills.

Much. Old as the mill. We had it i' the Red King's time, and so I may be more of a man than to be bowled over like a ninepin. There! [*Strikes.*

King Richard. There!

[*Much falls.*

Robin. 'Much would have more,' says the proverb; but Much hath had more than enough. Give me thy hand, Much; I love thee (*lifts him up*). At him, Scarlet!

Scarlet. I cannot cope with him: my wrist is strain'd.

King Richard. Try, thyself, valorous Robin!

Robin. I am mortally afraid o' thee, thou big man, But seeing valour is one against all odds, There!

King Richard. There!

[*Robin falls back, and is caught in the arms of Little John.*

Robin. Good, now I love thee mightily, thou tall fellow.

Break thine alliance with this faithless John,

And live with us and the birds in the green wood.

King Richard. I cannot break it, Robin, if I wish'd.

Still I am more for Richard than for John.

Little John. Look, Robin, at the far end of the glade

I see two figures crawling up the hill.

[*Distant sound of trumpets.*

Robin. The Abbot of York and his justiciary.

King Richard (aside). They know me. I must not as yet be known.

Friends, your free sports have swallow'd my free hour.

Farewell at once, for I must hence upon The King's affair.

Robin. Not taste his venison first?

Friar Tuck. Hast thou not fought for it, and earn'd it? Stay, Dine with my brethren here, and on thine own.

King Richard. And which be they?

Friar Tuck. Geese, man! for how canst thou be thus allied With John, and serve King Richard save thou be

A traitor or a goose? but stay with Robin;

For Robin is no scatterbrains like Richard,

Robin's a wise man, Richard a wiseacre, Robin's an outlaw, but he helps the poor.

While Richard hath outlaw'd himself, and helps

Nor rich, nor poor. Richard's the king of courtesy,

For if he did me the good grace to kick me

I could but sneak and smile and call it courtesy,

For he's a king.

And that is only courtesy *by* courtesy—

But Robin is a thief of courtesy

Whom they that suffer by him call the blossom

Of bandits. There—to be a thief of courtesy—

There is a trade of genius, there's glory! Again, this Richard sacks and wastes a town

With random pillage, but our Robin takes

From whom he knows are hypocrites and liars.

Again this Richard risks his life for a straw,

So lies in prison—while our Robin's life Hangs by a thread, but he is a free man.

Richard, again, is king over a realm He hardly knows, and Robin king of Sherwood,

And loves and dotes on every dingle of it.

Again this Richard is the lion of Cyprus, Robin, the lion of Sherwood—may this mouth

Never suck grape again, if our true Robin

Be not the nobler lion of the twain.

King Richard. Gramercy for thy preachment! if the land

Were ruleable by tongue, thou shouldst be king.

And yet thou know'st how little of thy king!

What was this realm of England, all the crowns

Of all this world, to Richard when he flung

His life, heart, soul into those holy wars That sought to free the tomb-place of the King

Of all the world? thou, that art church-man too

In a fashion, and shouldst feel with him. Farewell!

I left mine horse and armour with a Squire,

And I must see to 'em.

Robin. When wilt thou return?

King Richard. Return, I? when? when Richard will return.

Robin. No sooner? when will that be? canst thou tell?

But I have ta'en a sudden fancy to thee.

Accept this horn! if e'er thou be assail'd

In any of our forests, blow upon it

Three mots, this fashion—listen! (*blows*)

Canst thou do it!

[*King Richard blows.*]

Blown like a true son of the woods.

Farewell!

[*Exit King Richard.*]

Enter ABBOT and JUSTICIARY

Friar Tuck. Church and Law, halt and pay toll!

Justiciary. Rogue, we have thy captain's safe-conduct; though he be the chief of rogues, he hath never broken his word.

Abbot. There is our bond.

[*Gives it to Robin.*]

Robin. I thank thee.

Justiciary. Ay, but where, Where is this old Sir Richard of the Lea?

Thou told'st us we should meet him in
the forest,
Where he would pay us down his thousand
marks.

Robin. Give him another month, and
he will pay it.

Justiciary. We cannot give a month.

Robin. Why then a week.

Justiciary. No, not an hour: the
debt is due to-day.

Abbot. Where is this laggard Richard
of the Lea?

Robin. He hath been hurt, was grow-
ing whole again,

Only this morning in his agony
Lest he should fail to pay these thousand
marks

He is stricken with a slight paralysis.
Have you no pity? must you see the
man?

Justiciary. Ay, ay, what else? how
else can this be settled?

Robin. Go men, and fetch him hither
on the litter.

[*Sir Richard Lea is brought in.*
Marian comes with him.

Marian. Here is my father's bond.

[*Gives it to Robin Hood.*

Robin. I thank thee, dear.

Justiciary. Sir Richard, it was agreed
when you borrowed these monies from
the Abbot that if they were not repaid
within a limited time your land should
be forfeit.

Sir Richard. The land! the land.

Marian. You see he is past himself.
What would you more?

Abbot. What more? one thousand
marks,

Or else the land.

You hide this damsel in your forest here,
[*Pointing to Marian.*

You hope to hold and keep her for your-
self,

You heed not how you soil her maiden
fame,

You scheme against her father's weal and
hers,

For so this maid would wed our brother,
he

Would pay us all the debt at once, and
thus

This old Sir Richard might redeem his
land.

He is all for love, he cares not for the
land.

Sir Richard. The land, the land!

Robin (*giving two bags to the Abbot*).

Here be one thousand marks
Out of our treasury to redeem the land.

[*Pointing to each of the bags.*
Half here, half there.

[*Plaudits from his band.*

Justiciary. Ay, ay, but there is use,
four hundred marks.

Robin (*giving a bag to Justiciary*).
There then, four hundred marks.

[*Plaudits.*

Justiciary. What did I say?
Nay, my tongue tript—five hundred marks
for use.

Robin (*giving another bag to him*). A
hundred more? There then, a
hundred more. [*Plaudits.*

Justiciary. Ay, ay, but you see the
bond and the letter of the law. It is
stated there that these monies should be
paid in to the Abbot at York, at the end
of the month at noon, and they are
delivered here in the wild wood an hour
after noon.

Marian. The letter—O how often
justice drowns

Between the law and letter of the law!

O God, I would the letter of the law

Were some strong fellow here in the wild
wood,

That thou mightst beat him down at
quarterstaff!

Have you no pity?

Justiciary. You run down your game,
We ours. What pity have you for your
game?

Robin. We needs must live. Our
bowmen are so true

They strike the deer at once to death—
he falls

And knows no more.

Marian. Pity, pity!—There was a
man of ours

Up in the north, a goodly fellow too,
He met a stag there on so narrow a ledge—

A precipice above, and one below—
There was no room to advance or to retire.
The man lay down—the delicate-footed creature

Came stepping o'er him, so as not to harm him—

The hunter's passion flash'd into the man,

He drove his knife into the heart of the deer,

The deer fell dead to the bottom, and the man

Fell with him, and was crippled ever after.

I fear I had small pity for that man.—
You have the monies and the use of them.
What would you more?

Justiciary. What? must we dance attendance all the day?

Robin. Dance! ay, by all the saints and all the devils ye shall dance. When the Church and the law have forgotten God's music, they shall dance to the music of the wild wood. Let the birds sing, and do you dance to their song. What, you will not? Strike up our music, Little John. (*He plays.*) They will not! Prick 'em in the calves with the arrow-points—prick 'em in the calves.

Abbot. Rogue, I am full of gout. I cannot dance.

Robin. And Sir Richard cannot redeem his land. Sweat out your gout, friend, for by my life, you shall dance till he can. Prick him in the calves!

Justiciary. Rogue, I have a swollen vein in my right leg, and if thou prick me there I shall die.

Robin. Prick him where thou wilt, so that he dance.

Abbot. Rogue, we come not alone.

Justiciary. Not the right.

Abbot. We told the Prince and the Sheriff of our coming.

Justiciary. Take the left leg for the love of God.

Abbot. They follow us.

Justiciary. You will all of you hang.

Robin. Let us hang, so thou dance meanwhile; or by that same love of God we will hang thee, prince or no prince, sheriff or no sheriff.

Justiciary. Take care, take care! I dance—I will dance—I dance.

[*Abbot and Justiciary dance to music, each holding a bag in each hand.*]

Enter SCARLET

Scarlet. The Sheriff! the Sheriff, follow'd by Prince John
And all his mercenaries! We sighted 'em

Only this moment. By St. Nicholas
They must have sprung like Ghosts from underground,
Or, like the Devils they are, straight up from Hell.

Robin. Crouch all into the bush!

[*The Foresters and Peasants hide behind the bushes.*]

Marian. Take up the litter!

Sir Richard. Move me no more!
I am sick and faint with pain!

Marian. But, Sir, the Sheriff—

Sir Richard. Let me be, I say!

The Sheriff will be welcome! let me be!

Marian. Give me my bow and arrows. I remain

Beside my Father's litter.

Robin. And fear not thou!

Each of us has an arrow on the cord;

We all keep watch.

Enter SHERIFF OF NOTTINGHAM

Sheriff. Marian!

Marian. Speak not. I wait upon a dying father.

Sheriff. The debt hath not been paid.
She will be mine.

What are you capering for? By old St. Vitus

Have you gone mad? Has it been paid?

Abbot (dancing). O yes.

Sheriff. Have I lost her then?

Justiciary (dancing). Lost her? O no, we took

Advantage of the letter—O Lord, the vein!

Not paid at York—the wood—prick me no more!

Sheriff. What pricks thee save it be thy conscience, man?

Justiciary. By my halidome I felt him at my leg still. Where be they gone to?

Sheriff. Thou art alone in the silence of the forest
Save for this maiden and thy brother Abbot,
And this old crazeling in the litter there.

Enter on one side FRIAR TUCK from the bush, and on the other PRINCE JOHN and his SPEARMEN, with banners and trumpets, etc.

Justiciary (examining his leg). They have missed the vein.

Abbot. And we shall keep the land.

Sheriff. Sweet Marian, by the letter of the law

It seems thy father's land is forfeited.

Sir Richard. No! let me out of the litter. He shall wed thee:
The land shall still be mine. Child,
thou shalt wed him,

Or thine old father will go mad—he will,
He will—he feels it in his head.

Marian. O peace!

Father, I cannot marry till Richard comes.

Sir Richard. And then the Sheriff!

Marian. Ay, the Sheriff, father,
Would buy me for a thousand marks in gold—

Sell me again perchance for twice as much.

A woman's heart is but a little thing,
Much lighter than a thousand marks in gold;

But pity for a father, it may be,
Is weightier than a thousand marks in gold.

I cannot love the Sheriff.

Sir Richard. But thou wilt wed him?

Marian. Ay, save King Richard,
when he comes, forbid me.

Sweet heavens, I could wish that all the land

Were plunged beneath the waters of the sea,

Tho' all the world should go about in boats.

Friar Tuck. Why, so should all the love-sick be sea-sick.

Marian. Better than heart-sick, friar.

Prince John (to Sheriff). See you not They are jesting at us yonder, mocking us? Carry her off, and let the old man die.

[*Advancing to Marian.*
Come, girl, thou shalt along with us on the instant.

Friar Tuck (brandishing his staff).
Then on the instant I will break thy head.

Sheriff. Back, thou fool-friar! Knowest thou not the Prince?

Friar Tuck (muttering). He may be prince; he is not gentleman.

Prince John. Look! I will take the rope from off thy waist

And twist it round thy neck and hang thee by it.

Seize him and truss him up, and carry her off.

[*Friar Tuck slips into the bush.*

Marian (drawing the bow). No nearer to me! back! My hand is firm,
Mine eye most true to one hair's-breadth of aim.

You, Prince, our king to come—you that dishonour

The daughters and the wives of your own faction—

Who hunger for the body, not the soul—
This gallant Prince would have me of his—what?

Household? or shall I call it by that new term

Brought from the sacred East, his harem? Never,

Tho' you should queen me over all the realms

Held by King Richard, could I stoop so low

As mate with one that holds no love is pure,

No friendship sacred, values neither man
Nor woman save as tools—God help the
mark—

To his own unprinciply ends. And you,
you, Sheriff,

[Turning to the Sheriff.

Who thought to buy your marrying me
with gold.

Marriage is of the soul, not of the body.
Win me you cannot, murder me you may,
And all I love, Robin, and all his men,
For I am one with him and his; but
while

I breathe Heaven's air, and Heaven
looks down on me,
And smiles at my best meanings, I
remain

Mistress of mine own self and mine own
soul.

[Retreating, with bow drawn, to the bush.
Robin!

Robin. I am here, my arrow on the
cord.

He dies who dares to touch thee.

Prince John. Advance, advance!
What, daunted by a garrulous, arrogant
girl!

Seize her and carry her off into my castle.

Sheriff. Thy castle!

Prince John. Said I not, I loved
thee, man?

Risk not the love I bear thee for a girl.

Sheriff. Thy castle!

Prince John. See thou thwart me
not, thou fool!

When Richard comes he is soft enough
to pardon

His brother; but all those that held with
him,

Except I plead for them, will hang as
high

As Haman.

Sheriff. She is mine. I have thy
promise.

Prince John. O ay, she shall be thine
—first mine, then thine.

For she shall spend her honeymoon with
me.

Sheriff. Woe to that land shall own
thee for her king!

Prince John. Advance, advance!

[They advance shouting. The King
in armour reappears from the wood.

King Richard. What shouts are
these that ring along the wood?

Friar Tuck (coming forward). Hail,
knight, and help us. Here is
one would clutch

Our pretty Marian for his paramour,
This other, willy-nilly, for his bride.

King Richard. Damsel, is this the
truth?

Marian. Ay, noble knight.

Friar Tuck. Ay, and she will not
marry till Richard come.

King Richard (raising his visor). I
am here, and I am he.

Prince John (lowering his, and whisper-
ing to his men). It is not he—
his face—tho' very like—

No, no! we have certain news he died in
prison.

Make at him, all of you, a traitor coming
In Richard's name—it is not he—not he.

[The men stand amazed.

Friar Tuck (going back to the bush).
Robin, shall we not move?

Robin. It is the King
Who bears all down. Let him alone
awhile.

He loves the chivalry of his single arm.

Wait till he blow the horn.

Friar Tuck (coming back). If thou be
king,

Be not a fool! Why blowest thou not
the horn?

King Richard. I that have turn'd
their Moslem crescent pale—

I blow the horn against this rascal rout!

[Friar Tuck plucks the horn from
him and blows. Richard dashes
alone against the Sheriff and
John's men, and is almost borne
down, when Robin and his men
rush in and rescue him.

King Richard (to Robin Hood).
Thou hast saved my head at the
peril of thine own.

Prince John. A horse! a horse! I
must away at once;

I cannot meet his eyes. I go to Nottingham.

Sheriff, thou wilt find me at Nottingham.

[Exit.

Sheriff. If anywhere, I shall find thee in hell.

What ! go to slay his brother, and make me

The monkey that should roast his chest-nuts for him !

King Richard. I fear to ask who left us even now.

Robin. I grieve to say it was thy father's son.

Shall I not after him and bring him back ?

King Richard. No, let him be. Sheriff of Nottingham,

[*Sheriff kneels.*

I have been away from England all these years,

Heading the holy war against the Moslem, While thou and others in our kingless realms

Were fighting underhand unholy wars Against your lawful king.

Sheriff. My liege, Prince John—

King Richard. Say thou no word against my brother John.

Sheriff. Why then, my liege, I have no word to say.

King Richard (to Robin). My good friend Robin, Earl of Huntingdon, For Earl thou art again, hast thou no fetters

For those of thine own band who would betray thee ?

Robin. I have ; but these were never worn as yet.

I never found one traitor in my band.

King Richard. Thou art happier than thy king. Put him in chains.

[*They fetter the Sheriff.*

Robin. Look o'er these bonds, my liege.

[*Shows the King the bonds.*

They talk together.

King Richard. You, my lord Abbot, you Justiciary,

[*The Abbot and Justiciary kneel.*

I made you Abbot, you Justiciary :

You both are utter traitors to your king.

Justiciary. O my good liege, we did believe you dead.

Robin. Was justice dead because the King was dead ?

Sir Richard paid his monies to the Abbot. You crost him with a quibble of your law.

King Richard. But on the faith and honour of a king

The land is his again.

Sir Richard. The land ! the land !

I am crazed no longer, so I have the land.

[*Comes out of the litter and kneels.*

God save the King !

King Richard (raising Sir Richard).

I thank thee, good Sir Richard.

Maid Marian.

Marian. Yes, King Richard.

King Richard. Thou wouldst marry This Sheriff when King Richard came again

Except—

Marian. The King forbid it. True, my liege.

King Richard. How if the King command it ?

Marian. Then, my liege,

If you would marry me with a traitor sheriff,

I fear I might prove traitor with the sheriff.

King Richard. But if the King forbid thy marrying

With Robin, our good Earl of Huntingdon.

Marian. Then will I live for ever in the wild wood.

Robin (coming forward). And I with thee.

King Richard. On nuts and acorns, ha !

Or the King's deer ? Earl, thou when we were hence

Hast broken all our Norman forest laws, And scruplest not to flaunt it to our face That thou wilt break our forest laws again

When we are here. Thou art overbold.

Robin. My king,
I am but the echo of the lips of love.

King Richard. Thou hast risk'd thy
life for mine: bind these two
men.

[*They take the bags from the Abbot
and Justiciary, and proceed to
fetter them.*]

Justiciary. But will the King, then,
judge us all unheard?

I can defend my cause against the
traitors

Who fain would make me traitor. If
the King

Condemn us without trial, men will call
him

An Eastern tyrant, not an English king.

Abbot. Besides, my liege, these men
are outlaws, thieves,

They break thy forest laws—nay, by the
rood

They have done far worse—they plunder
—yea, ev'n bishops,

Yea, ev'n archbishops—if thou side with
these,

Beware, O King, the vengeance of the
Church.

Friar Tuck (*brandishing his staff*).

I pray you, my liege, let me execute the
vengeance of the Church upon them. I
have a stout crabstick here, which longs
to break itself across their backs.

Robin. Keep silence, bully friar,
before the King.

Friar Tuck. If a cat may look at a
king, may not a friar speak to one?

King Richard. I have had a year of
prison-silence, Robin,

And heed him not—the vengeance of the
Church!

Thou shalt pronounce the blessing of the
Church

On those two here, Robin and Marian.

Marian. He is but hedge-priest, Sir
King.

King Richard. And thou their Queen.
Our rebel Abbot then shall join your
hands,

Or lose all hope of pardon from us—
yet

Not now, not now—with after-dinner
grace.

Nay, by the dragon of St. George, we
shall

Do some injustice, if you hold us here
Longer from our own venison. Where
is it?

I scent it in the green leaves of the wood.

Marian. First, king, a boon!

King Richard. Why surely ye are
pardon'd,

Even this brawler of harsh truths—I
trust

Half truths, good friar: ye shall with us
to court.

Then, if ye cannot breathe but woodland
air,

Thou Robin shalt be ranger of this forest,
And have thy fees, and break the law no
more.

Marian. It is not that, my lord.

King Richard. Then what, my lady?

Marian. This is the gala-day of thy
return.

I pray thee, for the moment strike the
bonds

From these three men, and let them dine
with us,

And lie with us among the flowers, and
drink—

Ay, whether it be gall or honey to 'em—
The king's good health in ale and
Malvoisie.

King Richard. By Mahound I could
dine with Beelzebub!

So now which way to the dinner?

Marian. Past the bank
Of foxglove, then to left by that one yew.
You see the darkness thro' the lighter
leaf.

But look, who comes?

Enter SAILOR

Sailor. We heard Sir Richard Lea
was here with Robin.

O good Sir Richard, I am like the man
In Holy Writ, who brought his talent
back;

For tho' we touch'd at many pirate ports,
We ever fail'd to light upon thy son.

Here is thy gold again. I am sorry for it.

Sir Richard. The gold—my son—my gold, my son, the land—

Here Abbot, Sheriff—no—no, Robin Hood.

Robin. Sir Richard, let that wait till we have dined.

Are all our guests here?

King Richard. No—there's yet one other:

I will not dine without him. Come from out

[*Enter WALTER LEA.*

That oak-tree! This young warrior broke his prison

And join'd my banner in the Holy Land,

And cleft the Moslem turban at my side.

My masters, welcome gallant Walter Lea.

Kiss him, Sir Richard—kiss him, my sweet Marian.

Marian. O Walter, Walter, is it thou indeed

Whose ransom was our ruin, whose return

Builds up our house again? I fear I dream.

Here—give me one sharp pinch upon the cheek

That I may feel thou art no phantom—yet

Thou art tann'd almost beyond my knowing, brother.

[*They embrace.*

Walter Lea. But thou art fair as ever, my sweet sister.

Sir Richard. Art thou my son?

Walter Lea. I am, good father, I am.

Sir Richard. I had despair'd of thee—that sent me crazed.

Thou art worth thy weight in all those marks of gold,

Yea, and the weight of the very land itself,

Down to the inmost centre.

Robin. Walter Lea,
Give me that hand which fought for Richard there.

Embrace me, Marian, and thou, good Kate,

[*To Kate entering.*

Kiss and congratulate me, my good Kate.
[*She kisses him.*

Little John. Lo now! lo now!

I have seen thee clasp and kiss a man indeed,

For our brave Robin is a man indeed.

Then by thine own account thou shouldst be mine.

Kate. Well then, who kisses first?

Little John. Kiss both together.

[*They kiss each other.*

Robin. Then all is well. In this full tide of love,

Wave heralds wave: thy match shall follow mine (*to Little John*).

Would there were more—a hundred lovers more

To celebrate this advent of our King!

Our forest games are ended, our free life,

And we must hence to the King's court.

I trust

We shall return to the wood. Meanwhile, farewell

Old friends, old patriarch oaks. A thousand winters

Will strip you bare as death, a thousand summers

Robe you life-green again. *You* seem, as it were,

Immortal, and we mortal. How few Junes

Will heat our pulses quicker! How few frosts

Will chill the hearts that beat for Robin Hood!

Marian. And yet I think these oaks at dawn and even,

Or in the balmy breathings of the night,

Will whisper evermore of Robin Hood.

We leave but happy memories to the forest.

We dealt in the wild justice of the woods.

All those poor serfs whom we have served will bless us,

All those pale mouths which we have fed will praise us—

All widows we have holpen pray for us,

Our Lady's blessed shrines throughout the land

Be all the richer for us. You, good
friar,
You Much, you Scarlet, you dear Little
John,
Your names will cling like ivy to the
wood.

And here perhaps a hundred years away
Some hunter in day-dreams or half
asleep

Will hear our arrows whizzing overhead,
And catch the winding of a phantom
horn.

Robin. And surely these old oaks
will murmur thee
Marian along with Robin. I am most
happy—

Art thou not mine?—and happy that our
King
Is here again, never I trust to roam
So far again, but dwell among his own.
Strike up a stave, my masters, all is
well.

SONG WHILE THEY DANCE A COUNTRY
DANCE

Now the King is home again, and nevermore to
roam again,
Now the King is home again, the King will have
his own again,
Home again, home again, and each will have his
own again,
All the birds in merry Sherwood sing and sing
him home again.

DEMETER

AND OTHER POEMS

TO THE MARQUIS OF DUFFERIN AND AVA

I

At times our Britain cannot rest,
At times her steps are swift and rash ;
She moving, at her girdle clash
The golden keys of East and West.

II

Not swift or rash, when late she lent
The sceptres of her West, her East,
To one, that ruling has increased
Her greatness and her self-content.

III

Your rule has made the people love
Their ruler. Your viceregal days
Have added fulness to the phrase
Of ' Gauntlet in the velvet glove.'

IV

But since your name will grow with Time,
Not all, as honouring your fair fame
Of Statesman, have I made the name
A golden portal to my rhyme :

V

But more, that you and yours may know
From me and mine, how dear a debt
We owed you, and are owing yet
To you and yours, and still would owe.

VI

For he—your India was his Fate,
And drew him over sea to you—
He fain had ranged her thro' and thro',
To serve her myriads and the State,—

VII

A soul that, watch'd from earliest youth,
And on thro' many a brightening year,

Had never swerved for craft or fear,
By one side-path, from simple truth ;

VIII

Who might have chased and clasp
Renown
And caught her chaplet here—and there
In haunts of jungle-poison'd air
The flame of life went wavering down ;

IX

But ere he left your fatal shore,
And lay on that funereal boat,
Dying, ' Unspeakable ' he wrote
' Their kindness,' and he wrote no more ;

X

And sacred is the latest word ;
And now the Was, the Might-have-
been,
And those lone rites I have not seen,
And one drear sound I have not heard,

XI

Are dreams that scarce will let me be,
Not there to bid my boy farewell,
When That within the coffin fell,
Fell—and flash'd into the Red Sea,

XII

Beneath a hard Arabian moon
And alien stars. To question, why
The sons before the fathers die,
Not mine ! and I may meet him soon ;

XIII

But while my life's late eve endures,
Nor settles into hueless gray,
My memories of his briefer day
Will mix with love for you and yours.

ON THE JUBILEE OF QUEEN
VICTORIA

I

FIFTY times the rose has flower'd and
faded,
Fifty times the golden harvest fallen,
Since our Queen assumed the globe, the
sceptre.

II

She beloved for a kindliness
Rare in Fable or History,
Queen, and Empress of India,
Crown'd so long with a diadem
Never worn by a worthier,
Now with prosperous auguries
Comes at last to the bounteous
Crowning year of her Jubilee.

III

Nothing of the lawless, of the Despot,
Nothing of the vulgar, or vainglorious,
All is gracious, gentle, great and Queenly.

IV

You then joyfully, all of you,
Set the mountain aflame to-night,
Shoot your stars to the firmament,
Deck your houses, illuminate
All your towns for a festival,
And in each let a multitude
Loyal, each, to the heart of it,
One full voice of allegiance,
Hail the fair Ceremonial
Of this year of her Jubilee.

V

Queen, as true to womanhood as Queen-
hood,
Glorying in the glories of her people,
Sorrowing with the sorrows of the lowest!

VI

You, that wanton in affluence,
Spare not now to be bountiful,
Call your poor to regale with you,
All the lowly, the destitute,

Make their neighbourhood health
fuller,
Give your gold to the Hospital,
Let the weary be comforted,
Let the needy be banqueted,
Let the main'd in his heart rejoice
At this glad Ceremonial,
And this year of her Jubilee.

VII

Henry's fifty years are all in shadow,
Gray with distance Edward's fifty sum-
mers,
Ev'n her Grandsire's fifty half forgotten.

VIII

You, the Patriot Architect,
You that shape for Eternity,
Raise a stately memorial,
Make it regally gorgeous,
Some Imperial Institute,
Rich in symbol, in ornament,
Which may speak to the centuries,
All the centuries after us,
Of this great Ceremonial,
And this year of her Jubilee.

IX

Fifty years of ever-broadening Com-
merce!
Fifty years of ever-brightening Science!
Fifty years of ever-widening Empire!

X

You, the Mighty, the Fortunate,
You, the Lord-territorial,
You, the Lord-manufacturer,
You, the hardy, laborious,
Patient children of Albion,
You, Canadian, Indian,
Australasian, African,
All your hearts be in harmony,
All your voices in unison,
Singing 'Hail to the glorious
Golden year of her Jubilee!'

XI

Are there thunders moaning in the dis-
tance?

Are there spectres moving in the darkness?
 Trust the Hand of Light will lead her people,
 Till the thunders pass, the spectres vanish,
 And the Light is Victor, and the darkness
 Dawns into the Jubilee of the Ages.

TO PROFESSOR JEBB

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM

FAIR things are slow to fade away,
 Bear witness you, that yesterday¹
 From out the Ghost of Pindar in you
 Roll'd an Olympian; and they say²
 That here the torpid mummy wheat
 Of Egypt bore a grain as sweet
 As that which gilds the glebe of
 England,
 Sunn'd with a summer of milder heat.
 So may this legend for awhile,
 If greeted by your classic smile,
 Tho' dead in its Trinacrian Enna,
 Blossom again on a colder isle.

DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE

(IN ENNA)

FAINT as a climate-changing bird that flies
 All night across the darkness, and at dawn
 Falls on the threshold of her native land,
 And can no more, thou camest, O my child,
 Led upward by the God of ghosts and dreams,
 Who laid thee at Eleusis, dazed and dumb

¹ In Bologna.

² They say, for the fact is doubtful.

With passing thro' at once from state to state,
 Until I brought thee hither, that the day,
 When here thy hands let fall the gather'd flower,
 Might break thro' clouded memories once again
 On thy lost self. A sudden nightingale
 Saw thee, and flash'd into a frolic of song
 And welcome; and a gleam as of the moon,
 When first she peers along the tremulous deep,
 Fled wavering o'er thy face, and chased away
 That shadow of a likeness to the king
 Of shadows, thy dark mate. Persephone!
 Queen of the dead no more—my child!
 Thine eyes
 Again were human-godlike, and the Sun
 Burst from a swimming fleece of winter gray,
 And robed thee in his day from head to feet—
 'Mother!' and I was folded in thine arms.

Child, those imperial, disimpassion'd eyes
 Awed even me at first, thy mother—eyes
 That oft had seen the serpent-wanded power
 Draw downward into Hades with his drift
 Offlickering spectres, lighted from below
 By the red race of fiery Phlegethon;
 But when before have Gods or men beheld
 The Life that had descended re-arise,
 And lighted from above him by the Sun?
 So mighty was the mother's childless cry,
 A cry that rang thro' Hades, Earth, and Heaven!

So in this pleasant vale we stand again,
 The field of Enna, now once more ablaze
 With flowers that brighten as thy footstep falls,

All flowers—but for one black blur of
earth
Left by that closing chasm, thro' which
the car
Of dark Aidoneus rising rapt thee
hence.
And here, my child, tho' folded in thine
arms,
I feel the deathless heart of motherhood
Within me shudder, lest the naked glebe
Should yawn once more into the gulf,
and thence
The shrilly whinnys of the team of
Hell,
Ascending, pierce the glad and songful
air,
And all at once their arch'd necks, mid-
night-maned,
Jet upward thro' the mid-day blossom.
No !
For, see, thy foot has touch'd it ; all the
space
Of blank earth-baldness clothes itself
afresh,
And breaks into the crocus-purple hour
That saw thee vanish.

Child, when thou wert gone,
I envied human wives, and nested birds,
Yea, the cubb'd lioness ; went in search
of thee
Thro' many a palace, many a cot, and
gave
Thy breast to ailing infants in the night,
And set the mother waking in amaze
To find her sick one whole ; and forth
again
Among the wail of midnight winds, and
cried,
'Where is my loved one ? Wherefore
do ye wail ?'
And out from all the night an answer
shrill'd,
'We know not, and we know not why we
wail.'
I climb'd on all the cliffs of all the seas,
And ask'd the waves that moan about
the world
'Where ? do ye make your moaning for
my child ?'

And round from all the world the voices
came
'We know not, and we know not why
we moan.'
'Where ?' and I stared from every eagle-
peak,
I thridded the black heart of all the
woods,
I peer'd thro' tomb and cave, and in the
storms
Of Autumn swept across the city, and
heard
The murmur of their temples chanting
me,
Me, me, the desolate Mother ! 'Where ?'
—and turn'd,
And fled by many a waste, forlorn of
man,
And grieved for man thro' all my grief
for thee,—
The jungle rooted in his shatter'd hearth,
The serpent coil'd about his broken shaft,
The scorpion crawling over naked
skulls ;—
I saw the tiger in the ruin'd fane
Spring from his fallen God, but trace of
thee
I saw not ; and far on, and, following out
A league of labyrinthine darkness, came
On three gray heads beneath a gleaming
rift.
'Where ?' and I heard one voice from
all the three
'We know not, for we spin the lives of
men,
And not of Gods, and know not why we
spin !
There is a Fate beyond us.' Nothing
knew.

Last as the likeness of a dying man,
Without his knowledge, from him flits to
warn
A far-off friendship that he comes no
more,
So he, the God of dreams, who heard
my cry,
Drew from thyself the likeness of thyself
Without thy knowledge, and thy shadow
past

Before me, crying 'The Bright one in
the highest
Is brother of the Dark one in the lowest,
And Bright and Dark have sworn that I,
the child
Of thee, the great Earth-Mother, thee,
the Power
That lifts her buried life from gloom to
bloom,
Should be for ever and for evermore
The Bride of Darkness.'

So the Shadow wail'd.
Then I, Earth-Goddess, cursed the Gods
of Heaven.
I would not mingle with their feasts; to
me
Their nectar smack'd of hemlock on the
lips,
Their rich ambrosia tasted aconite.
The man, that only lives and loves an
hour,
Seem'd nobler than their hard Eternities.
My quick tears kill'd the flower, my
ravings hush'd
The bird, and lost in utter grief I fail'd
To send my life thro' olive-yard and vine
And golden grain, my gift to helpless
man.
Rain-rotten died the wheat, the barley-
spears
Were hollow-husk'd, the leaf fell, and
the sun,
Pale at my grief, drew down before his
time
Sickening, and Ætna kept her winter
snow.
Then He, the brother of this Darkness,
He
Who still is highest, glancing from his
height
On earth a fruitless fallow, when he
miss'd
The wonted steam of sacrifice, the praise
And prayer of men, decreed that thou
should'st dwell
For nine white moons of each whole year
with me,
Three dark ones in the shadow with thy
King.

Once more the reaper in the gleam of
dawn
Will see me by the landmark far away,
Blessing his field, or seated in the dusk
Of even, by the lonely threshing-floor,
Rejoicing in the harvest and the grange.
Yet I, Earth-Goddess, am but ill-
content
With them, who still are highest. Those
gray heads,
What meant they by their 'Fate beyond
the Fates'
But younger kindlier Gods to bear us
down,
As we bore down the Gods before us?
Gods,
To quench, not hurl the thunderbolt, to
stay,
Not spread the plague, the famine; Gods
indeed,
To send the noon into the night and
break
The sunless halls of Hades into Heaven?
Till thy dark lord accept and love the Sun,
And all the Shadow die into the Light,
When thou shalt dwell the whole bright
year with me,
And souls of men, who grew beyond
their race,
And made themselves as Gods against
the fear
Of Death and Hell; and thou that hast
from men,
As Queen of Death, that worship which
is Fear,
Henceforth, as having risen from out the
dead,
Shalt ever send thy life along with mine
From buried grain thro' springing blade,
and bless
Their garner'd Autumn also, reap with me,
Earth-mother, in the harvest hymns of
Earth
The worship which is Love, and see no
more
The Stone, the Wheel, the dimly-
glimmering lawns
Of that Elysium, all the hateful fires
Of torment, and the shadowy warrior glide
Along the silent field of Asphodel.

OWD ROÄ¹

NAÄY, nöä mander² o' use to be callin'
'im Roä, Roä, Roä,

Fur the dog's stoän-deäf, an' e's blind, 'e
can naither stan' nor goä.

But I meäns fur to maäke 'is owd aäge
as 'appy as iver I can,

Fur I owäs owd Roäver moor nor I iver
owäd mottal man.

Thou's rode of 'is back when a babby,
afoor thou was gotten too owd,

Fur 'e'd fetch an' carry like owt, 'e was
allus as good as gowd.

Eh, but 'e'd fight wi' a will *when* 'e
fowt; 'e could howd³ 'is oan,

An' Roä was the dog as knaw'd when
an' wheere to bury his boane.

An' 'e kep his heäd hoop like a king, an'
'e'd niver not down wi' 'is taäil,

Fur 'e'd niver done nowt to be shaämed
on, when we was i' Howlaby
Daäle.

An' 'e sarved me sa well when 'e lived,
that, Dick, when 'e cooms to be
deäd,

I thinks as I'd like fur to hev soom soort
of a sarvice read.

Fur 'e's moor good sense na the Parlia-
ment man 'at stans fur us 'ere,

An' I'd voät fur 'im, my oän sen, if 'e
could but stan fur the Shere.

'Faäithful an' True'—them words be i'
Scriptur—an' Faäithful an' True

Ull be fun'⁴ upo' four short legs ten times
fur one upo' two.

An' maäybe they'll walk upo' two but I
knaws they runs upo' four,⁵—

Bedtime, Dicky! but waät till tha 'eärs
it be strikin' the hour.

Fur I wants to tell tha o' Roä when we
lived i' Howlaby Daäle,

Ten year sin—Naäy—naäy! tha mun
nobbut hev' one glass of aäle.

Straänge an' owd-farran'd¹ the 'ouse, an'
belt² long afoor my daäy

Wi' haäfe o' the chimleys a-twizzen'd³
an' twined like a band o' haäy.

The fellers as maäkes them picturs, 'ud
coom at the fall o' the year,

An' saddle their ends upo' stools to pictur
the door-poorch theree,

An' the Heagle 'as hed two heäds stannin'
theree o' the brokken stick;⁴

An' they niver 'ed seed sich ivin'⁵ as
graw'd hall ower the brick;

An' theree i' the 'ouse one night—but it's
down, an' all on it now

Goan into mangles an' tonups,⁶ an'
raäved slick thruf by the plow—

Theere, when the 'ouse wur a house, one
night I wur sittin' aloän,

Wi' Roäver athurt my feeät, an' sleeäpin
still as a stoän,

Of a Christmas Eäve, an' as cowd as
this, an' the midders⁷ as white,

An' the fences all on 'em bolster'd oop
wi' the windle⁸ that night;

An' the cat wur a-sleeäpin alongside
Roäver, but I wur awaäke,

An' smoäkin' an' thinkin' o' things—
Doänt maäke thysen sick wi' the
caäke.

Fur the men ater supper 'ed sung their
songs an' 'ed 'ed their beer,

An' 'ed goän their waäys; ther was
nobbut three, an' nöän on 'em
theree.

1 'Owd-farran'd,' old-fashioned. 2 Built.

3 'Twizzen'd,' twisted. 4 On a staff *ragulë*.

5 Ivy. 6 Mangolds and turnips.

7 Meadows. 8 Drifted snow.

1 Old Rover. 2 Manner. 3 Hold.

4 Found. 5 'Ou' as in 'house.'

They was all on 'em fear'd o' the Ghoäst
an' dussn't not sleeäp i' the 'ouse,
But Dicky, the Ghoäst moästlins¹ was
nobbüt a rat or a mouse.

An' I looökt out wonst² at the night,
an' the daäle was all of a thaw,
Fur I seed the beck coomin' down like
a long black snaäke i' the snaw,

An' I heärd greät heäps o' the snaw
slushin' down fro' the bank to
the beck,

An' then as I stood i' the doorwaäy, I
feeäld it drip o' my neck.

Saw I turn'd in ageän, an' I thowt o'
the good owd times 'at was goan,
An' the munney they maäde by the war,
an' the times 'at was coomin' on ;

Fur I thowt if the Staäte was a gawin'
to let in furriners' wheät,
Howiver was British farmers to stan'
ageän o' their feeät.

Howiver was I fur to find my rent an'
to paäy my men ?
An' all along o' the feller³ as turn'd 'is
back of hissen.

Thou slep i' the chaumber above us, we
couldn't ha' 'eärd tha call,
Sa Moother 'ed tell'd ma to bring tha
down, an' thy craädle an' all ;

Fur the gell o' the farm 'at slep wi' tha
then 'ed gotten wer leäve,
Fur to goä that night to 'er foälk by cause
o' the Christmas Eäve ;

But I cleän forgot tha, my lad, when
Moother 'ed gotten to bed,
An' I slep i' my chair hup-on-end, an' the
Freeä Traäde runn'd i' my 'ead,

Till I dream'd 'at Squire walkt in, an' I
says to him 'Squire, ya're lääte,'
Then I seed at 'is faäce wur as red as the
Yule-block theer i' the graäte.

An' 'e says 'can ya paäy me the rent to-
night?' an' I says to 'im 'Noä,'
An' 'e cotch'd howd hard o' my hairm,¹
'Then hout to-night tha shall goä.'

'Tha'll niver,' says I, 'be a-turnin ma
hout upo' Christmas Eäve ?'
Then I waäked an' I fun it was Roäver
a-tuggin' an' teärin' my slieäve.

An' I thowt as 'e'd goän cleän-wud,² fur
I noäwaäys knaw'd 'is intent ;
An' I says 'Git awaäy, ya beäst,' an' I
fetcht 'im a kick an' 'e went.

Then 'e tummled up stairs, fur I 'eärd
'im, as if 'e'd 'a brokken 'is neck,
An' I'd cleär forgot, little Dicky, thy
chaumber door wouldn't sneck ;³

An' I slep i' my chair ageän wi' my hairm
hingin' down to the floor,
An' I thowt it was Roäver a-tuggin' an'
teärin' me wuss nor afoor,

An' I thowt 'at I kick'd 'im ageän, but I
kick'd thy Moother istead.
'What arta snorin' theere fur? the house
is afire,' she said.

Thy Moother 'ed beän a-naggin' about
the gell o' the farm,
She offens 'ud spy summut wrong when
there warn't not a mossel o' harm ;

An' she didn't not solidly meän I wur
gawin' that waäy to the bad,
Fur the gell⁴ was as howry a trollope
as iver traäpes'd i' the squad.

But Moother was free of 'er tongue, as I
offens 'ev tell'd 'er mysen,
Sa I kep i' my chair, fur I thowt she
was nobbut a-rilin' ma then.

An' I says 'I'd be good to tha, Bess, if
tha'd onywaäys let ma be good,'

¹ Arm.² Mad.³ Latch.¹ 'Moästlins,' for the most part, generally.² Once.³ Peel.⁴ The girl was as dirty a slut as ever trudged in the mud, but there is a sense of slatternliness in 'traäpes'd' which is not expressed in 'trudged.'

But she skelpt ma haäfe ower i' the chair,
an' screeäd like a Howl gone
wud¹—

'Ya mun run fur the lether.² Git oop,
if ya're onywaäys good for owt.'
And I says 'If I beänt noäwaäys—not
nowadaäys—good fur nowt—

Yit I beänt sich a Nowt³ of all Nowts
as 'ull hallus do as 'e's bid.'

'But the stairs is afire,' she said; then I
seed 'er a-cryin', I did.

An' she beäld 'Ya mun saäve little Dick,
an' be sharp about it an' all,'
Sa I runs to the yard fur a lether, an'
sets 'im ageän the wall,

An' I claums an' I mashes the winder
hin, when I gits to the top,
But the heät druv hout i' my heyes till I
feäld mysen ready to drop.

Thy Moother was howdin' the lether, an'
tellin' me not to be skeärd,
An' I wasn't afeärd, or I thinks leäst-
waäys as I wasn't afeärd;

But I couldn't see fur the smoäke wheree
thou was a-liggin, my lad,
An' Roäver was there i' the chaumber
a-yowlin' an' yaupin' like mad;

An' thou was a-beälin' likewise, an' a-
squeälin', as if tha was bit,
An' it wasn't a bite but a burn, fur the
merk's⁴ o' thy shou'der yit;

Then I call'd out Roä, Roä, Roä, thaw
I didn't haäfe think as 'e'd 'ear,
*But 'e coom'd thruf the fire wi' my bairn
'e 'is mouth to the winder there!*

He coom'd like a Hangel o' marcy as
soon as 'e 'eärd 'is naäme,
Or like tother Hangel i' Scriptur 'at
summun seed i' the flaäme,

¹ She half overturned me and shrieked like an
owl gone mad.

² Ladder.

³ A thoroughly insignificant or worthless
person.

⁴ Mark.

When summun 'ed hax'd fur a son, an'
'e promised a son to she,
An' Roä was as good as the Hangel i'
saävin' a son fur me.

Sa I browt tha down, an' I says 'I mun
gaw up ageän fur Roä.'

'Gaw up ageän fur the varmint?' I
tell'd 'er 'Yeäs I mun goä.'

An' I claumb'd up ageän to the winder,
an' clemm'd¹ owd Roä by the 'eäd,
An' 'is 'air coom'd off i' my 'ands an' I
taäked 'im at fust fur deäd;

Fur 'e smell'd like a herse a-singein', an'
seeäm'd as blind as a poop,
An' haäfe on 'im bare as a bublin'.² I
couldn't wakken 'im oop,

But I browt 'im down, an' we got to the
barn, fur the barn wouldn't burn
Wi' the wind blawin' hard tother waäy,
an' the wind wasn't like to turn.

An' I kep a-callin' o' Roä till 'e waggled
'is taäil fur a bit,
But the cocks kep a-crawin' an' crawin'
all night, an' I 'ears 'em yit;

An' the dogs was a-yowlin' all round, and
thou was a-squeälin' thysen,
An' Moother was naggin' an' groänin' an'
moänin' an' naggin' ageän;

An' I 'eärd the bricks an' the baulks³
rummle down when the roof gev
waäy,

Fur the fire was a-raägin' an' raävin' an'
roarin' like judgment daäy.

Warm enew theree sewer-ly, but the barn
was as cowl as owt,

An' we cuddled and huddled together, an'
happt⁴ wersens oop as we mowt.

An' I browt Roä round, but Moother 'ed
beän sa soäk'd wi' the thaw
'At she cotch'd 'er death o' cowl that
night, poor soul, i' the straw.

¹ Clutched.

² 'Bubbling,' a young unfledged bird.

³ Beams.

⁴ Wrapt ourselves.

Haäfe o' the parish runn'd oop when the
 rigtree¹ was tummlin' in—
 Too laäte—but it's all ower now—hall
 hower—an' ten year sin ;

Too laäte, tha mun git tha to bed, but
 I'll coom an' I'll squench the light,
 Fur we moänt 'ev naw moor fires—and
 soa little Dick, good-night.

¹ The beam that runs along the roof of the
 house just beneath the ridge.

VASTNESS

I

MANY a hearth upon our dark globe
 sighs after many a vanish'd face,
 Many a planet by many a sun may roll
 with the dust of a vanish'd race.

II

Raving politics, never at rest—as this
 poor earth's pale history runs,—
 What is it all but a trouble of ants in the
 gleam of a million million of suns ?

III

Lies upon this side, lies upon that side,
 truthless violence mourn'd by the
 Wise,
 Thousands of voices drowning his own in
 a popular torrent of lies upon lies ;

IV

Stately purposes, valour in battle, glorious
 annals of army and fleet,
 Death for the right cause, death for the
 wrong cause, trumpets of victory,
 groans of defeat ;

V

Innocence seethed in her mother's milk,
 and Charity setting the martyr
 aflame ;
 Thralldom who walks with the banner of
 Freedom, and recks not to ruin a
 realm in her name.

VI

Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the
 gloom of doubts that darken the
 schools ;
 Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her
 hand, follow'd up by her vassal
 legion of fools ;

VII

Trade flying over a thousand seas with
 her spice and her vintage, her silk
 and her corn ;
 Desolate offing, sailorless harbours,
 famishing populace, wharves for-
 lorn ;

VIII

Star of the morning, Hope in the sunrise ;
 gloom of the evening, Life at a
 close ;
 Pleasure who flaunts on her wide down-
 way with her flying robe and her
 poison'd rose ;

IX

Pain, that has crawl'd from the corpse of
 Pleasure, a worm which writhes
 all day, and at night
 Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper,
 and stings him back to the curse
 of the light ;

X

Wealth with his wines and his wedded
 harlots ; honest Poverty, bare to
 the bone ;
 Opulent Avarice, lean as Poverty ;
 Flattery gilding the rift in a
 throne ;

XI

Fame blowing out from her golden
 trumpet a jubilant challenge to
 Time and to Fate ;
 Slander, her shadow, sowing the nettle on
 all the laurel'd graves of the Great ;

XII

Love for the maiden, crown'd with
marriage, no regrets for aught
that has been,
Household happiness, gracious children,
debtless competence, golden mean;

XIII

National hatreds of whole generations,
and pigmy spite of the village
spire;
Vows that will last to the last death-
ruckle, and vows that are snapt
in a moment of fire;

XIV

He that has lived for the lust of the
minute, and died in the doing it,
flesh without mind;
He that has nail'd all flesh to the Cross,
till Self died out in the love of
his kind;

XV

Spring and Summer and Autumn and
Winter, and all these old revolu-
tions of earth;
All new-old revolutions of Empire—
change of the tide—what is all of
it worth?

XVI

What the philosophies, all the sciences,
poesy, varying voices of prayer?
All that is noblest, all that is basest, all
that is filthy with all that is fair?

XVII

What is it all, if we all of us end but in
being our own corpse-coffins at
last,
Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence,
drown'd in the deeps of a mean-
ingless Past?

XVIII

What but a murmur of gnats in the
gloom, or a moment's anger of
bees in their hive?—

* * * *

Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and
love him for ever: the dead are
not dead but alive.

Dedicated to the Hon. J. Russell
Lowell

THE RING

MIRIAM AND HER FATHER

Miriam (singing)

MELLOW moon of heaven,
Bright in blue,
Moon of married hearts,
Hear me, you!

Twelve times in the year
Bring me bliss,
Globing Honey Moons
Bright as this.

Moon, you fade at times
From the night.
Young again you grow
Out of sight.

Silver crescent-curve,
Coming soon,
Globe again, and make
Honey Moon.

Shall not *my* love last,
Moon, with you,
For ten thousand years
Old and new?

Father. And who was he with such
love-drunken eyes
They made a thousand honey moons of
one?

Miriam. The prophet of his own, my
Hubert—his
The words, and mine the setting. 'Air
and Words,'
Said Hubert, when I sang the song, 'are
bride
And bridegroom.' Does it please you?

Father. Mainly, child,
Because I hear your Mother's voice in
yours,
She——, why, you shiver tho' the wind
is west
With all the warmth of summer.

Miriam. Well, I felt
On a sudden I know not what, a breath
that past
With all the cold of winter.

Father (*muttering to himself*). Even
so.
The Ghost in Man, the Ghost that once
was Man,
But cannot wholly free itself from Man,
Are calling to each other thro' a dawn
Stranger than earth has ever seen; the
veil

Is rending, and the Voices of the day
Are heard across the Voices of the dark.
No sudden heaven, nor sudden hell, for
man,
But thro' the Will of One who knows
and rules—

And utter knowledge is but utter love—
Æonian Evolution, swift or slow,
Thro' all the Spheres—an ever opening
height,

An ever lessening earth—and she perhaps,
My Miriam, breaks her latest earthly link
With me to-day.

Miriam. You speak so low, what is it?
Your 'Miriam breaks'—is making a new
link
Breaking an old one?

Father. No, for we, my child,
Have been till now each other's all-in-all.

Miriam. And you the lifelong guard-
ian of the child.

Father. I, and one other whom you
have not known.

Miriam. And who? what other?

Father. Whither are you bound?
For Naples which we only left in May?

Miriam. No! father, Spain, but
Hubert brings me home

With April and the swallow. Wish me
joy!

Father. What need to wish when
Hubert weds in you

The heart of Love, and you the soul of
Truth
In Hubert?

Miriam. Tho' you used to call me
once

The lonely maiden-Princess of the wood,
Who meant to sleep her hundred sum-
mers out

Before a kiss should wake her.

Father. Ay, but now
Your fairy Prince has found you, take
this ring.

Miriam. 'Io t' amo'—and these dia-
monds—beautiful!

'From Walter,' and for me from you then?

Father. Well,
One way for Miriam.

Miriam. Miriam am I not?

Father. This ring bequeath'd you by
your mother, child,
Was to be given you—such her dying
wish—

Given on the morning when you came of
age

Or on the day you married. Both the
days

Now close in one. The ring is doubly
yours.

Why do you look so gravely at the tower?

Miriam. I never saw it yet so all
ablaze

With creepers crimsoning to the pinnacles,
As if perpetual sunset linger'd there,
And all ablaze too in the lake below!

And how the birds that circle round the
tower

Are cheeping to each other of their flight
To summer lands!

Father. And that has made you grave?
Fly—care not. Birds and brides must
leave the nest.

Child, I am happier in your happiness
Than in mine own.

Miriam. It is not that!

Father. What else?

Miriam. That chamber in the tower.

Father. What chamber, child?
Your nurse is here?

Miriam. My Mother's nurse and mine.
She comes to dress me in my bridal veil.

Father. What did she say?

Miriam. She said, that you and I
Had been abroad for my poor health so
long
She fear'd I had forgotten her, and I
ask'd
About my Mother, and she said, 'Thy
hair

Is golden like thy Mother's, not so fine.'

Father. What then? what more?

Miriam. She said—perhaps indeed
She wander'd, having wander'd now so
far

Beyond the common date of death—that
you,

When I was smaller than the statuette
Of my dear Mother on your bracket here—
You took me to that chamber in the tower,
The topmost—a chest there, by which
you knelt—

And there were books and dresses—left
to me,

A ring too which you kiss'd, and I, she
said,

I babbled, Mother, Mother—as I used
To prattle to her picture—stretch'd my
hands

As if I saw her; then a woman came
And caught me from my nurse. I hear
her yet—

A sound of anger like a distant storm.

Father. Garrulous old crone.

Miriam. Poor nurse!

Father. I bad her keep,
Like a seal'd book, all mention of the
ring,

For I myself would tell you all to-day.

Miriam. 'She too might speak to-
day,' she mumbled. Still,

I scarce have learnt the title of your book,
But you will turn the pages.

Father. Ay, to-day!
I brought you to that chamber on your
third

September birthday with your nurse, and
felt

An icy breath play on me, while I stoopt
To take and kiss the ring.

Miriam. This very ring
Io t' amo?

Father. Yes, for some wild hope
was mine

That, in the misery of my married life,
Miriam your Mother might appear to me.
She came to you, not me. The storm,
you hear

Far-off, is Muriel—your stepmother's
voice.

Miriam. Vext, that you thought my
Mother came to me?

Or at my crying 'Mother'? or to find
My Mother's diamonds hidden from her
there,

Like worldly beauties in the Cell, not
shown

To dazzle all that see them?

Father. Wait a while.

Your Mother and stepmother—Miriam
Erne

And Muriel Erne—the two were cousins
—lived

With Muriel's mother on the down, that
sees

A thousand squares of corn and meadow,
far

As the gray deep, a landscape which
your eyes

Have many a time ranged over when a
babe.

Miriam. I climb'd the hill with
Hubert yesterday,

And from the thousand squares, one
silent voice

Came on the wind, and seem'd to say
'Again.'

We saw far off an old forsaken house,
Then home, and past the ruin'd mill.

Father. And there

I found these cousins often by the brook,
For Miriam sketch'd and Muriel threw
the fly;

The girls of equal age, but one was fair,
And one was dark, and both were beauti-
ful.

No voice for either spoke within my heart
Then, for the surface eye, that only doats
On outward beauty, glancing from the one
To the other, knew not that which
pleased it most,

The raven ringlet or the gold; but both

Were dowerless, and myself, I used to
walk

This Terrace—morbid, melancholy; mine
And yet not mine the hall, the farm, the
field;

For all that ample woodland whisper'd
'debt,'

The brook that feeds this lakelet mur-
mur'd 'debt,'

And in yon arching avenue of old elms,
Tho' mine, not mine, I heard the sober
rook

And carrion crow cry 'Mortgage.'

Miriam. Father's fault
Visited on the children!

Father. Ay, but then
A kinsman, dying, summon'd me to
Rome—

He left me wealth—and while I journey'd
hence,

And saw the world fly by me like a dream,
And while I communed with my truest
self,

I woke to all of truest in myself,
Till, in the gleam of those mid-summer
dawns,

The form of Muriel faded, and the face
Of Miriam grew upon me, till I knew;
And past and future mix'd in Heaven
and made

The rosy twilight of a perfect day.

Miriam. So glad? no tear for him,
who left you wealth,

Your kinsman?

Father. I had seen the man but once;
He loved my name not me; and then I
pass'd

Home, and thro' Venice, where a jeweller,
So far gone down, or so far up in life,
That he was nearing his own hundred,
sold

This ring to me, then laugh'd 'the ring
is weird.'

And weird and worn and wizard-like was
he.

'Why weird?' I ask'd him; and he said
'The souls

Of two repentant Lovers guard the ring';
Then with a ribald twinkle in his bleak
eyes—

'And if you give the ring to any maid,
They still remember what it cost them
here,

And bind the maid to love you by the
ring;

And if the ring were stolen from the
maid,

The theft were death or madness to the
thief,

So sacred those Ghost Lovers hold the
gift.'

And then he told their legend:

'Long ago
Two lovers parted by a scurrilous tale
Had quarrell'd, till the man repenting
sent

This ring "Io t' amo" to his best beloved,
And sent it on her birthday. She in
wrath

Return'd it on her birthday, and that day
His death-day, when, half-frenzied by the
ring,

He wildly fought a rival suitor, him
The causer of that scandal, fought and
fell;

And she that came to part them all too
late,

And found a corpse and silence, drew the
ring

From his dead finger, wore it till her
death,

Shrined him within the temple of her
heart,

Made every moment of her after life

A virgin victim to his memory,
And dying rose, and rear'd her arms, and
cried

"I see him, Io t' amo, Io t' amo."

Miriam. Legend or true? so tender
should be true!

Did *he* believe it? did you ask him?

Father. Ay!
But that half skeleton, like a barren
ghost

From out the fleshless world of spirits,
laugh'd:

A hollow laughter!

Miriam. Vile, so near the ghost
Himself, to laugh at love in death! But
you?

Father. Well, as the bygone lover
thro' this ring
Had sent his cry for her forgiveness, I
Would call thro' this 'Io t' amo' to the
heart
Of Miriam; then I bad the man en-
grave
'From Walter' on the ring, and send it
—wrote
Name, surname, all as clear as noon, but
he—
Some younger hand must have engraven
the ring—
His fingers were so stiffen'd by the frost
Of seven and ninety winters, that he
scrawl'd
A 'Miriam' that might seem a 'Muriel';
And Muriel claim'd and open'd what I
meant
For Miriam, took the ring, and flaunted
it
Before that other whom I loved and love.
A mountain stay'd me here, a minster
there,
A galleried palace, or a battlefield,
Where stood the sheaf of Peace: but—
coming home—
And on your Mother's birthday—all but
yours—
A week betwixt—and when the tower as
now
Was all ablaze with crimson to the roof,
And all ablaze too plunging in the lake
Head-foremost—who were those that
stood between
The tower and that rich phantom of the
tower?
Muriel and Miriam, each in white, and
like
May-blossoms in mid autumn—was it
they?
A light shot upward on them from the
lake.
What sparkled there? whose hand was
that? they stood
So close together. I am not keen of
sight,
But coming nearer—Muriel had the ring—
'O Miriam! have you given your ring to
her?

O Miriam! Miriam reddened, Muriel
clench'd
The hand that wore it, till I cried again:
'O Miriam, if you love me take the ring!'
She glanced at me, at Muriel, and was
mute.
'Nay, if you cannot love me, let it be.'
Then—Muriel standing ever statue-like—
She turn'd, and in her soft imperial way
And saying gently: 'Muriel, by your
leave,'
Unclosed the hand, and from it drew the
ring,
And gave it me, who pass'd it down her
own,
'Io t' amo, all is well then.' Muriel fled.
Miriam. Poor Muriel!
Father. Ay, poor Muriel
when you hear
What follows! Miriam loved me from
the first,
Not thro' the ring; but on her marriage-
morn
This birthday, death-day, and betrothal
ring,
Laid on her table overnight, was gone;
And after hours of search and doubt and
threats,
And hubbub, Muriel enter'd with it,
'See!—
Found in a chink of that old moulder'd
floor!'
My Miriam nodded with a pitying smile,
As who should say 'that those who lose
can find.'
Then I and she were married for a
year,
One year without a storm, or even a
cloud;
And you my Miriam born within the
year;
And she my Miriam dead within the
year.
I sat beside her dying, and she gaspt:
'The books, the miniature, the lace are
hers,
My ring too when she comes of age, or
when
She marries; you—you loved me, kept
your word.'

You love me still "Io t' amo."—Muriel
—no—

She cannot love; she loves her own
hard self,

Her firm will, her fix'd purpose. Pro-
mise me,

Miriam not Muriel—she shall have the
ring.'

And there the light of other life, which
lives

Beyond our burial and our buried eyes,
Gleam'd for a moment in her own on
earth.

I swore the vow, then with my latest
kiss

Upon them, closed her eyes, which would
not close,

But kept their watch upon the ring and
you.

Your birthday was her death-day.

Miriam. O poor Mother!

And you, poor desolate Father, and
poor me,

The little senseless, worthless, wordless
babe,

Saved when your life was wreck'd!

Father. Desolate? yes!

Desolate as that sailor, whom the storm
Had parted from his comrade in the
boat,

And dash'd half dead on barren sands,
was I.

Nay, you were my one solace; only—
you

Were always ailing. Muriel's mother
sent,

And sure am I, by Muriel, one day came
And saw you, shook her head, and patted
yours,

And smiled, and making with a kindly
pinch

Each poor pale cheek a momentary rose—
'That should be fix'd,' she said; 'your
pretty bud,

So blighted here, would flower into full
health

Among our heath and bracken. Let her
come!

And we will feed her with our mountain
air,

And send her home to you rejoicing.'
No—

We could not part. And once, when
you my girl

Rode on my shoulder home—the tiny fist
Had graspt a daisy from your Mother's
grave—

By the lych-gate was Muriel. 'Ay,' she
said,

'Among the tombs in this damp vale of
yours!

You scorn my Mother's warning, but the
child

Is paler than before. We often walk
In open sun, and see beneath our feet
The mist of autumn gather from your
lake,

Aud shroud the tower; and once we
only saw

Your gilded vane, a light above the
mist'—

(Our old bright bird that still is veering
there

Above his four gold letters) 'and the
light,'

She said, 'was like that light'—and there
she paused,

And long; till I believing that the girl's
Lean fancy, groping for it, could not find
One likeness, laugh'd a little and found
her two—

'A warrior's crest above the cloud of
war'—

'A fiery phoenix rising from the smoke,
The pyre he burnt in.'—'Nay,' she said,
'the light

That glimmers on the marsh and on the
grave.'

And spoke no more, but turn'd and
pass'd away.

Miriam, I am not surely one of those
Caught by the flower that closes on the
fly,

But after ten slow weeks her fix'd intent,
In aiming at an all but hopeless mark

To strike it, struck; I took, I left you
there;

I came, I went, was happier day by day;
For Muriel nursed you with a mother's
care;

Till on that clear and heather-scented
height
The rounder cheek had brighten'd into
bloom.
She always came to meet me carrying
you,
And all her talk was of the babe she
loved ;
So, following her old pastime of the brook,
She threw the fly for me ; but oftener left
That angling to the mother. ' Muriel's
health
Had weaken'd, nursing little Miriam.
Strange !
She used to shun the wailing babe, and
doats
On this of yours.' But when the matron
saw
That hinted love was only wasted bait,
Not risen to, she was bolder. ' Ever
since
You sent the fatal ring '—I told her ' sent
To Miriam,' ' Doubtless—ay, but ever
since
In all the world my dear one sees but
you—
In your sweet babe she finds but you—
she makes
Her heart a mirror that reflects but you.'
And then the tear fell, the voice broke.
Her heart !
I gazed into the mirror, as a man
Who sees his face in water, and a stone,
That glances from the bottom of the
pool,
Strike upward thro' the shadow ; yet at
last,
Gratitude—loneliness—desire to keep
So skilled a nurse about you always—
nay !
Some half remorseful kind of pity too—
Well ! well, you know I married Muriel
Erne.
' I take thee Muriel for my wedded
wife '—
I had forgotten it was your birthday,
child—
When all at once with some electric thrill
A cold air pass'd between us, and the
hands

Fell from each other, and were join'd
again.
No second cloudless honeymoon was
mine.
For by and by she sicken'd of the farce,
She dropt the gracious mask of mother-
hood,
She came no more to meet me, carrying
you,
Nor ever cared to set you on her knee,
Nor ever let you gambol in her sight,
Nor ever cheer'd you with a kindly smile,
Nor ever ceased to clamour for the ring ;
Why had I sent the ring at first to her ?
Why had I made her love me thro' the
ring,
And then had changed ? so fickle are
men—the best !
Not she—but now my love was hers
again,
The ring by right, she said, was hers
again.
At times too shrilling in her angrier
moods,
' That weak and watery nature love you ?
No !
" *Io t' amo, Io t' amo* " !' flung herself
Against my heart, but often while her
lips
Were warm upon my cheek, an icy breath,
As from the grating of a sepulchre,
Past over both. I told her of my vow,
No pliable idiot I to break my vow ;
But still she made her outcry for the ring ;
For one monotonous fancy madden'd
her,
Till I myself was madden'd with her cry,
And even that ' *Io t' amo*,' those three
sweet
Italian words, became a weariness.
My people too were scared with eerie
sounds,
A footstep, a low throbbing in the walls,
A noise of falling weights that never fell,
Weird whispers, bells that rang without
a hand,
Door-handles turn'd when none was at
the door,
And bolted doors that open'd of them-
selves :

And one betwixt the dark and light had
seen

Her, bending by the cradle of her babe.

Miriam. And I remember once that
being waked

By noises in the house—and no one near—
I cried for nurse, and felt a gentle hand
Fall on my forehead, and a sudden face
Look'd in upon me like a gleam and
pass'd,

And I was quieted, and slept again.

Or is it some half memory of a dream?

Father. Your fifth September birth-
day.

Miriam. And the face,
The hand,—my Mother.

Father. *Miriam*, on that day
Two lovers parted by no scurrilous tale—
Mere want of gold—and still for twenty
years

Bound by the golden cord of their first
love—

Had ask'd us to their marriage, and to
share

Their marriage-banquet. *Muriel*, paler
then

Than ever you were in your cradle,
moan'd,

'I am fitter for my bed, or for my grave,
I cannot go, go you.' And then she rose,
She clung to me with such a hard embrace,
So lingeringly long, that half-amazed
I parted from her, and I went alone.

And when the bridegroom murmur'd,
'With this ring,'

I felt for what I could not find, the key,
The guardian of her relics, of *her* ring.
I kept it as a sacred amulet

About me,—gone! and gone in that
embrace!

Then, hurrying home, I found her not
in house

Or garden—up the tower—an icy air
Fled by me.—There, the chest was open
—all

The sacred relics tost about the floor—
Among them *Muriel* lying on her face—
I raised her, call'd her '*Muriel*, *Muriel*
wake!'

The fatal ring lay near her; the glazed eye

Glared at me as in horror. Dead! I
took

And chafed the freezing hand. A red
mark ran

All round one finger pointed straight,
the rest

Were crumpled inwards. Dead!—and
maybe stung

With some remorse, had stolen, worn the
ring—

Then torn it from her finger, or as if—
For never had I seen her show remorse—

As if—

Miriam. —those two Ghost lovers—

Father. Lovers yet—

Miriam. Yes, yes!

Father. —but dead so long, gone up
so far,

That now their ever-rising life has dwarf'd
Or lost the moment of their past on earth,
As we forget our wail at being born.

As if—

Miriam. —a dearer ghost had—

Father. —wrench'd it away.

Miriam. Had floated in with sad
reproachful eyes,

Till from her own hand she had torn the
ring

In fright, and fallen dead. And I myself
Am half afraid to wear it.

Father. Well, no more!

No bridal music this! but fear not you!
You have the ring she guarded; that
poor link

With earth is broken, and has left her
free,

Except that, still drawn downward for
an hour,

Her spirit hovering by the church, where
she

Was married too, may linger, till she
sees

Her maiden coming like a Queen, who
leaves

Some colder province in the North to
gain

Her capital city, where the loyal bells
Clash welcome—linger, till her own, the
babe

She lean'd to from her Spiritual sphere,

Her lonely maiden-Princess, crown'd
with flowers,
Has enter'd on the larger woman-world
Of wives and mothers.

But the bridal veil—
Your nurse is waiting. Kiss me child
and go.

FORLORN

I

'HE is fled—I wish him dead—
He that wrought my ruin—
O the flattery and the craft
Which were my undoing . . .
In the night, in the night,
When the storms are blowing.

II

'Who was witness of the crime?
Who shall now reveal it?
He is fled, or he is dead,
Marriage will conceal it . . .
In the night, in the night,
While the gloom is growing.'

III

Catherine, Catherine, in the night,
What is this you're dreaming?
There is laughter down in Hell
At your simple scheming . . .
In the night, in the night,
When the ghosts are fleeting.

IV

You to place a hand in his
Like an honest woman's,
You that lie with wasted lungs
Waiting for your summons . . .
In the night, O the night!
O the deathwatch beating!

V

There will come a witness soon
Hard to be confuted,
All the world will hear a voice
Scream you are polluted . . .
In the night! O the night,
When the owls are wailing!

VI

Shame and marriage, Shame and
marriage,
Fright and foul dissembling,
Bantering bridesman, reddening priest,
Tower and altar trembling . . .
In the night, O the night,
When the mind is failing!

VII

Mother, dare you kill your child?
How your hand is shaking!
Daughter of the seed of Cain,
What is this you're taking? . . .
In the night, O the night,
While the house is sleeping.

VIII

Dreadful! has it come to this,
O unhappy creature?
You that would not tread on a worm
For your gentle nature . . .
In the night, O the night,
O the night of weeping!

IX

Murder would not veil your sin,
Marriage will not hide it,
Earth and Hell will brand your name,
Wretch you must abide it . . .
In the night, O the night,
Long before the dawning.

X

Up, get up, and tell him all,
Tell him you were lying!
Do not die with a lie in your mouth,
You that know you're dying . . .
In the night, O the night,
While the grave is yawning.

XI

No—you will not die before,
Tho' you'll ne'er be stronger;
You will live till *that* is born,
Then a little longer . . .
In the night, O the night,
While the Fiend is prowling.

XII

Death and marriage, Death and marriage !

Funeral hearses rolling !
Black with bridal favours mixt !
Bridal bells with tolling ! . . .
In the night, O the night,
When the wolves are howling.

XIII

Up, get up, the time is short,
Tell him now or never !
Tell him all before you die,
Lest you die for ever . . .
In the night, O the night,
Where there's no forgetting.

XIV

Up she got, and wrote him all,
All her tale of sadness,
Blister'd every word with tears,
And eased her heart of madness . . .
In the night, and nigh the dawn,
And while the moon was setting.

HAPPY

THE LEPER'S BRIDE

I

WHY wail you, pretty plover ? and what
is it that you fear ?
Is he sick your mate like mine ? have
you lost him, is he fled ?
And there—the heron rises from his
watch beside the mere,
And flies above the leper's hut, where
lives the living-dead.

II

Come back, nor let me know it ! would
he live and die alone ?
And has he not forgiven me yet, his
over-jealous bride,
Who am, and was, and will be his, his
own and only own,
To share his living death with him,
die with him side by side ?

III

Is that the leper's hut on the solitary
moor,
Where noble Ulric dwells forlorn, and
wears the leper's weed ?
The door is open. He ! is he standing
at the door,
My soldier of the Cross ? it is he and
he indeed !

IV

My roses—will he take them *now*—mine,
his—from off the tree
We planted both together, happy in
our marriage morn ?
O God, I could blaspheme, for he fought
Thy fight for Thee,
And Thou hast made him leper to
compass him with scorn—

V

Hast spared the flesh of thousands, the
coward and the base,
And set a crueller mark than Cain's
on him, the good and brave !
He sees me, waves me from him. I will
front him face to face.
You need not wave me from you. I
would leap into your grave.

* * * *

VI

My warrior of the Holy Cross and of the
conquering sword,
The roses that you cast aside—once
more I bring you these.
No nearer ? do you scorn me when you
tell me, O my lord,
You would not mar the beauty of your
bride with your disease.

VII

You say your body is so foul—then here
I stand apart,
Who yearn to lay my loving head upon
your leprous breast.
The leper plague may scale my skin but
never taint my heart ;
Your body is not foul to me, and body
is foul at best.

VIII

I loved you first when young and fair,
 but now I love you most ;
 The fairest flesh at last is filth on which
 the worm will feast ;
 This poor rib-grated dungeon of the holy
 human ghost,
 This house with all its hateful needs no
 cleaner than the beast,

IX

This coarse diseaseful creature which in
 Eden was divine,
 This Satan-haunted ruin, this little
 city of sewers,
 This wall of solid flesh that comes between
 your soul and mine,
 Will vanish and give place to the
 beauty that endures,

X

The beauty that endures on the Spiritual
 height,
 When we shall stand transfigured, like
 Christ on Hermon hill,
 And moving each to music, soul in soul
 and light in light,
 Shall flash thro' one another in a
 moment as we will.

XI

Foul ! foul ! the word was yours not
 mine, I worship that right hand
 Which fell'd the foes before you as the
 woodman fells the wood,
 And sway'd the sword that lighten'd back
 the sun of Holy land,
 And clove the Moslem crescent moon,
 and changed it into blood.

XII

And once I worshipt all too well this
 creature of decay,
 For Age will chink the face, and Death
 will freeze the supplest limbs—
 Yet you in your mid manhood—O the
 grief when yesterday
 They bore the Cross before you to the
 chant of funeral hymns.

XIII

'Libera me, Domine !' you sang the
 Psalm, and when
 The Priest pronounced you dead, and
 flung the mould upon your feet,
 A beauty came upon your face, not that
 of living men,
 But seen upon the silent brow when
 life has ceased to beat.

XIV

'Libera *nos*, Domine'—you knew not
 one was there
 Who saw you kneel beside your bier,
 and weeping scarce could see ;
 May I come a little nearer, I that heard,
 and changed the prayer
 And sang the married '*nos*' for the
 solitary '*me*.'

XV

My beauty marred by you ? by you ! so
 be it. All is well
 If I lose it and myself in the higher
 beauty, yours.
My beauty lured that falcon from his
 eyry on the fell,
 Who never caught one gleam of the
 beauty which endures—

XVI

The Count who sought to snap the bond
 that link'd us life to life,
 Who whisper'd me '*your Ulric loves*'
 —a little nearer still—
 He hiss'd, '*Let us revenge ourselves,*
your Ulric woos my wife'—
 A lie by which he thought he could
 subdue me to his will.

XVII

I knew that you were near me when I
 let him kiss my brow ;
Did he touch me on the lips ? I was
 jealous, anger'd, vain,
 And I meant to make *you* jealous. Are
 you jealous of me now ?
 Your pardon, O my love, if I ever gave
 you pain.

XVIII

You never once accused me, but I wept
 alone, and sigh'd
 In the winter of the Present for the
 summer of the Past ;
 That icy winter silence—how it froze you
 from your bride,
 Tho' I made one barren effort to break
 it at the last.

XIX

I brought you, you remember, these roses,
 when I knew
 You were parting for the war, and you
 took them tho' you frown'd ;
 You frown'd and yet you kiss'd them.
 All at once the trumpet blew,
 And you spur'd your fiery horse, and
 you hurl'd them to the ground.

XX

You parted for the Holy War without a
 word to me,
 And clear myself unask'd—not I. My
 nature was too proud.
 And him I saw but once again, and far
 away was he,
 When I was praying in a storm—the
 crash was long and loud—

XXI

That God would ever slant His bolt from
 falling on your head—
 Then I lifted up my eyes, he was coming
 down the fell—
 I clapt my hands. The sudden fire from
 Heaven had dash'd him dead,
 And sent him char'd and blasted to
 the deathless fire of Hell.

XXII

Sée, I sinn'd but for a moment. I re-
 pent and repent,
 And trust myself forgiven by the God
 to whom I kneel.
 A little nearer? Yes. I shall hardly be
 content
 Till I be leper like yourself, my love,
 from head to heel.

XXIII

O foolish dreams, that you, that I, would
 slight our marriage oath :
 I held you at that moment even dearer
 than before ;
 Now God has made you leper in His
 loving care for both,
 That we might cling together, never
 doubt each other more.

XXIV

The Priest, who join'd you to the dead,
 has join'd our hands of old ;
 If man and wife be but one flesh, let
 mine be leprous too,
 As dead from all the human race as if
 beneath the mould ;
 If you be dead, then I am dead, who
 only live for you.

XXV

Would Earth tho' hid in cloud not be
 follow'd by the Moon?
 The leech forsake the dying bed for
 terror of his life?
 The shadow leave the Substance in the
 brooding light of noon?
 Or if I had been the leper would you
 have left the wife?

XXVI

Not take them? Still you wave me off
 —poor roses—must I go—
 I have worn them year by year—from
 the bush we both had set—
 What? fling them to you?—well—that
 were hardly gracious. No !
 Your plague but passes by the touch.
 A little nearer yet !

XXVII

There, there ! he buried you, the Priest ;
 the Priest is not to blame,
 He joins us once again, to his either
 office true :
 I thank him. I am happy, happy.
 Kiss me. In the name
 Of the everlasting God, I will live and
 die with you.

[DEAN MILMAN has remarked that the protection and care afforded by the Church to this blighted race of lepers was among the most beautiful of its offices during the Middle Ages. The leprosy of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was supposed to be a legacy of the crusades, but was in all probability the offspring of meagre and unwholesome diet, miserable lodging and clothing, physical and moral degradation. The services of the Church in the seclusion of these unhappy sufferers were most affecting. The stern duty of looking to the public welfare is tempered with exquisite compassion for the victims of this loathsome disease. The ritual for the sequestration of the leprous differed little from the burial service. After the leper had been sprinkled with holy water, the priest conducted him into the church, the leper singing the psalm 'Liberate me, Domine,' and the crucifix and bearer going before. In the church a black cloth was stretched over two trestles in front of the altar, and the leper leaning at its side devoutly heard mass. The priest, taking up a little earth in his cloak, threw it on one of the leper's feet, and put him out of the church, if it did not rain too heavily; took him to his hut in the midst of the fields, and then uttered the prohibitions: 'I forbid you entering the church . . . or entering the company of others. I forbid you quitting your home without your leper's dress.' He concluded: 'Take this dress, and wear it in token of humility; take these gloves, take this clapper, as a sign that you are forbidden to speak to any one. You are not to be indignant at being thus separated from others, and as to your little wants, good people will provide for you, and God will not desert you.' Then in this old ritual follow these sad words: 'When it shall come to pass that the leper shall pass out of this world, he shall be buried in his hut, and not in the churchyard.' At first there was a doubt whether wives should follow their husbands who had been leprosy, or remain in the world and marry again. The Church decided that the marriage-tie was indissoluble, and so bestowed on these unhappy beings this immense source of consolation. With a love stronger than this living death, lepers were followed into banishment from the haunts of men by their faithful wives. Readers of Sir J. Stephen's *Essays on Ecclesiastical Biography* will recollect the description of the founder of the Franciscan order, how, controlling his involuntary disgust, St. Francis of Assisi washed the feet and dressed the sores of the lepers, once at least reverently applying his lips to their wounds.—BOUCHER-JAMES.]

This ceremony of quasi-burial varied considerably at different times and in different places. In some cases a grave was dug, and the leper's face was often covered during the service.

TO ULYSSES¹

I

ULYSSES, much-experienced man,
Whose eyes have known this globe of ours,
Her tribes of men, and trees, and flowers,
From Corrientes to Japan,

II

To you that bask below the Line,
I soaking here in winter wet—
The century's three strong eights have met
To drag me down to seventy-nine

III

In summer if I reach my day—
To you, yet young, who breathe the balm
Of summer-winters by the palm
And orange grove of Paraguay,

IV

I tolerant of the colder time,
Who love the winter woods, to trace
On paler heavens the branching grace
Of leafless elm, or naked lime,

V

And see my cedar green, and there
My giant ilex keeping leaf
When frost is keen and days are brief—
Or marvel how in English air

VI

My yucca, which no winter quells,
Altho' the months have scarce begun,
Has push'd toward our faintest sun
A spike of half-accomplish'd bells—

VII

Or watch the waving pine which here
The warrior of Caprera set,²

¹ 'Ulysses,' the title of a number of essays by W. G. Palgrave. He died at Monte Video before seeing my poem.

² Garibaldi said to me, alluding to his barren island, 'I wish I had your trees.'

A name that earth will not forget
Till earth has roll'd her latest year—

VIII

I, once half-crazed for larger light
On broader zones beyond the foam,
But chaining fancy now at home
Among the quarried downs of Wight,

IX

Not less would yield full thanks to you
For your rich gift, your tale of lands
I know not,¹ your Arabian sands;
Your cane, your palm, tree-fern, bamboo,

X

The wealth of tropic bower and brake;
Your Oriental Eden-isles,²
Where man, nor only Nature smiles;
Your wonder of the boiling lake;³

XI

Phra-Chai, the Shadow of the Best,⁴
Phra-bat⁵ the step; your Pontic coast;
Crag-cloister;⁶ Anatolian Ghost;⁷
Hong-Kong,⁸ Karnac,⁹ and all the rest.

XII

Thro' which I follow'd line by line
Your leading hand, and came, my
friend,
To prize your various book, and send
A gift of slenderer value, mine.

¹ The tale of Nejd.

² The Philippines.

³ In Dominica.

⁴ The Shadow of the Lord. Certain obscure markings on a rock in Siam, which express the image of Buddha to the Buddhist more or less distinctly according to his faith and his moral worth.

⁵ The footstep of the Lord on another rock.

⁶ The monastery of Sumelas.

⁷ Anatolian Spectre stories.

⁸ The Three Cities.

⁹ Travels in Egypt.

TO MARY BOYLE

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM

I

'SPRING-FLOWERS'! While you still
delay to take
Your leave of Town,
Our elmtree's ruddy-hearted blossom-
flake
Is fluttering down.

II

Be truer to your promise. There! I
heard
Our cuckoo call.
Be needle to the magnet of your word,
Nor wait, till all

III

Our vernal bloom from every vale and
plain
And garden pass,
And all the gold from each laburnum
chain
Drop to the grass.

IV

Is memory with your Marian gone to rest,
Dead with the dead?
For ere she left us, when we met, you
prest
My hand, and said

V

'I come with your spring-flowers.' You
came not, friend;
My birds would sing,
You heard not. Take then this spring-
flower I send,
This song of spring,

VI

Found yesterday—forgotten mine own
rhyme
By mine old self,
As I shall be forgotten by old Time,
Laid on the shelf—

VII

A rhyme that flower'd betwixt the whiten-
ing sloe
And kingcup blaze,
And more than half a hundred years ago,
In rick-fire days,

VIII

When Dives loathed the times, and paced
his land
In fear of worse,
And sanguine Lazarus felt a vacant hand
Fill with *his* purse.

IX

For lowly minds were madden'd to the
height
By tonguester tricks,
And once—I well remember that red
night
When thirty ricks,

X

All flaming, made an English homestead
Hell—
These hands of mine
Have helpt to pass a bucket from the well
Along the line,

XI

When this bare dome had not begun to
gleam
Thro' youthful curls,
And you were then a lover's fairy dream,
His girl of girls ;

XII

And you, that now are lonely, and with
Grief
Sit face to face,
Might find a flickering glimmer of relief
In change of place.

XIII

What use to brood? this life of mingled
pains
And joys to me,
Despite of every Faith and Creed, remains
The Mystery.

T

XIV

Let golden youth bewail the friend, the
wife,
For ever gone.
He dreams of that long walk thro' desert
life
Without the one.

XV

The silver year should cease to mourn
and sigh—
Not long to wait—
So close are we, dear Mary, you and I
To that dim gate.

XVI

Take, read ! and be the faults your Poet
makes
Or many or few,
He rests content, if his young music
wakes
A wish in you

XVII

To change our dark Queen-city, all her
realm
Of sound and smoke,
For his clear heaven, and these few lanes
of elm
And whispering oak.

THE PROGRESS OF SPRING

I

THE groundflame of the crocus breaks
the mould,
Fair Spring slides hither o'er the
Southern sea,
Wavers on her thin stem the snowdrop
cold
That trembles not to kisses of the bee :
Come, Spring, for now from all the
dripping eaves
The spear of ice has wept itself away,
And hour by hour unfolding woodbine
leaves
O'er his uncertain shadow droops the
day.

3 K

She comes ! The loosen'd rivulets run ;
 The frost-bead melts upon her golden
 hair ;
 Her mantle, slowly greening in the Sun,
 Now wraps her close, now arching
 leaves her bare
 To breaths of balmier air ;

II

Up leaps the lark, gone wild to welcome
 her,
 About her glance the tits, and shriek
 the jays,
 Before her skims the jubilant woodpecker,
 The linnet's bosom blushes at her gaze,
 While round her brows a woodland culver
 flits,
 Watching her large light eyes and
 gracious looks,
 And in her open palm a halcyon sits
 Patient—the secret splendour of the
 brooks.
 Come, Spring ! She comes on waste and
 wood,
 On farm and field : but enter also here,
 Diffuse thyself at will thro' all my blood,
 And, tho' thy violet sicken into sere,
 Lodge with me all the year !

III

Once more a downy drift against the
 brakes,
 Self-darken'd in the sky, descending
 slow !
 But gladly see I thro' the wavering flakes
 Yon blanching apricot likesnow in snow.
 These will thine eyes not brook in forest-
 paths,
 On their perpetual pine, nor round
 the beech ;
 They fuse themselves to little spicy baths,
 Solved in the tender blushes of the
 peach ;
 They lose themselves and die
 On that new life that gems the haw-
 thorn line ;
 Thy gay lent-lilies wave and put them by,
 And out once more in varnish'd glory
 shine
 Thy stars of celandine.

IV

She floats across the hamlet. Heaven
 lours,
 But in the tearful splendour of her
 smiles
 I see the slowly-thickening chestnut
 towers
 Fill out the spaces by the barren tiles.
 Now past her feet the swallow circling
 flies,
 A clamorous cuckoo stoops to meet
 her hand ;
 Her light makes rainbows in my closing
 eyes,
 I hear a charm of song thro' all the
 land.
 Come, Spring ! She comes, and Earth
 is glad
 To roll her North below thy deepening
 dome,
 But ere thy maiden birk be wholly clad,
 And these low bushes dip their twigs
 in foam,
 Make all true hearths thy home.

V

Across my garden ! and the thicket stirs,
 The fountain pulses high in sunnier jets,
 The blackcap warbles, and the turtle
 purrs,
 The starling claps his tiny castanets.
 Still round her forehead wheels the
 woodland dove,
 And scatters on her throat the sparks
 of dew,
 The kingcup fills her footprint, and above
 Broaden the glowing isles of vernal
 blue.
 Hail ample presence of a Queen,
 Bountiful, beautiful, apparell'd gay,
 Whose mantle, every shade of glancing
 green,
 Flies back in fragrant breezes to display
 A tunic white as May !

VI

She whispers, 'From the South I bring
 you balm,
 For on a tropic mountain was I born,

While some dark dweller by the coco-
palm

Watch'd my far meadow zoned with
airy morn ;

From under rose a muffled moan of
floods ;

I sat beneath a solitude of snow ;

There no one came, the turf was fresh,
the woods

Plunged gulf on gulf thro' all their
vales below.

I saw beyond their silent tops

The steaming marshes of the scarlet
cranes,

The slant seas leaning on the mangrove
copse,

And summer basking in the sultry
plains

About a land of canes ;

VII

'Then from my vapour-girdle soaring
forth

I scaled the buoyant highway of the
birds,

And drank the dews and drizzle of the
North,

That I might mix with men, and hear
their words

On pathway'd plains ; for—while my
hand exults

Within the bloodless heart of lowly
flowers

To work old laws of Love to fresh
results,

Thro' manifold effect of simple powers—

I too would teach the man

Beyond the darker hour to see the
bright,

That his fresh life may close as it began,
The still-fulfilling promise of a light

Narrowing the bounds of night.'

VIII

So wed thee with my soul, that I may
mark

The coming year's great good and
varied ills,

And new developments, whatever spark

Be struck from out the clash of warring
wills ;

Or whether, since our nature cannot rest,
The smoke of war's volcano burst

again

From hoary depths that belt the changeful
West,

Old Empires, dwellings of the kings
of men ;

Or should those fail, that hold the helm,
While the long day of knowledge

grows and warms,

And in the heart of this most ancient
realm

A hateful voice be utter'd, and alarms
Sounding 'To arms ! to arms !'

IX

A simpler, saner lesson might he learn

Who reads thy gradual process, Holy
Spring.

Thy leaves possess the season in their
turn,

And in their time thy warblers rise on
wing.

How surely glidest thou from March to
May,

And changest, breathing it, the sullen
wind,

Thy scope of operation, day by day,

Larger and fuller, like the human
mind !

Thy warmths from bud to bud

Accomplish that blind model in the
seed,

And men have hopes, which race the
restless blood,

That after many changes may succeed
Life, which is Life indeed.

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

I

O YOUNG Mariner,
You from the haven
Under the sea-cliff,
You that are watching
The gray Magician

With eyes of wonder,
 I am Merlin,
 And I am dying,
 I am Merlin
 Who follow The Gleam.

II

Mighty the Wizard
 Who found me at sunrise
 Sleeping, and woke me
 And learn'd me Magic !
 Great the Master,
 And sweet the Magic,
 When over the valley,
 In early summers,
 Over the mountain,
 On human faces,
 And all around me,
 Moving to melody,
 Floated The Gleam.

III

Once at the croak of a Raven
 who crost it,
 A barbarous people,
 Blind to the magic,
 And deaf to the melody,
 Snarl'd at and cursed me.
 A demon vext me,
 The light retreated,
 The landskip darken'd,
 The melody deaden'd,
 The Master whisper'd
 ' Follow the Gleam.'

IV

Then to the melody,
 Over a wilderness
 Gliding, and glancing at
 Elf of the woodland,
 Gnome of the cavern,
 Griffin and Giant,
 And dancing of Fairies
 In desolate hollows,
 And wraiths of the mountain,
 And rolling of dragons
 By warble of water,
 Or cataract music
 Of falling torrents,
 Flitted The Gleam.

V

Down from the mountain
 And over the level,
 And streaming and shining on
 Silent river,
 Silvery willow,
 Pasture and plowland,
 Innocent maidens,
 Garrulous children,
 Homestead and harvest,
 Reaper and gleaner,
 And rough-ruddy faces
 Of lowly labour,
 Slided The Gleam—

VI

Then, with a melody
 Stronger and statelier,
 Led me at length
 To the city and palace
 Of Arthur the king ;
 Touch'd at the golden
 Cross of the churches,
 Flash'd on the Tournament,
 Flicker'd and bicker'd
 From helmet to helmet,
 And last on the forehead
 Of Arthur the blameless
 Rested The Gleam.

VII

Clouds and darkness
 Closed upon Camelot ;
 Arthur had vanish'd
 I knew not whither,
 The king who loved me,
 And cannot die ;
 For out of the darkness
 Silent and slowly
 The Gleam, that had waned to a
 wintry glimmer
 On icy fallow
 And faded forest,
 Drew to the valley
 Named of the shadow,
 And slowly brightening
 Out of the glimmer,
 And slowly moving again to a melody
 Yearningly tender,

Fell on the shadow,
No longer a shadow,
But clothed with The Gleam.

VIII

And broader and brighter
The Gleam flying onward,
Wed to the melody,
Sang thro' the world ;
And slower and fainter,
Old and weary,
But eager to follow,
I saw, whenever
In passing it glanced upon
Hamlet or city,
That under the Crosses
The dead man's garden,
The mortal hillock,
Would break into blossom ;
And so to the land's
Last limit I came——
And can no longer,
But die rejoicing,
For thro' the Magic
Of Him the Mighty,
Who taught me in childhood,
There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers The Gleam.

IX

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight !
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

ROMNEY'S REMORSE

'I read Hayley's Life of Romney the other day—Romney wanted but education and reading to make him a very fine painter ; but his ideal

was not high nor fixed. How touching is the close of his life ! He married at nineteen, and because Sir Joshua and others had said that "marriage spoilt an artist" almost immediately left his wife in the North and scarce saw her till the end of his life ; when old, nearly mad and quite desolate, he went back to her and she received him and nursed him till he died. This quiet act of hers is worth all Romney's pictures ! even as a matter of Art, I am sure.' (*Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald*, vol. i.)

'BEAT, little heart—I give you this and this'

Who are you? What ! the Lady
Hamilton?

Good, I am never weary painting you.
To sit once more? Cassandra, Hebe,
Joan,
Or spinning at your wheel beside the
vine—

Bacchante, what you will ; and if I
fail

To conjure and concentrate into form
And colour all you are, the fault is less
In me than Art. What Artist ever yet
Could make pure light live on the canvas?
Art !

Why should I so disrelish that short word?
Where am I? snow on all the hills !
so hot,

So fever'd ! never colt would more delight
To roll himself in meadow grass than I
To wallow in that winter of the hills.

Nurse, were you hired? or came of
your own will
To wait on one so broken, so forlorn?
Have I not met you somewhere long ago?
I am all but sure I have—in Kendal
church—

O yes ! I hired you for a season there,
And then we parted ; but you look so
kind

That you will not deny my sultry throat
One draught of icy water. There—you
spill

The drops upon my forehead. Your
hand shakes.

I am ashamed. I am a trouble to you,
Could kneel for your forgiveness. Are
they tears?

For me—they do me too much grace—
for me?

O Mary, Mary!

Vexing you with words!
Words only, born of fever, or the fumes
Of that dark opiate dose you gave me,
—words,

Wild babble. I have stumbled back
again

Into the common day, the sounder self.
God stay me there, if only for your sake,
The truest, kindest, noblest-hearted wife
That ever wore a Christian marriage-
ring.

My curse upon the Master's apothegm,
That wife and children drag an Artist
down!

This seem'd my lodestar in the Heaven
of Art,

And lured me from the household fire on
earth.

To you my days have been a life-long lie,
Grafted on half a truth; and tho' you say
'Take comfort you have won the Painter's
fame,'

The best in me that sees the worst in me,
And groans to see it, finds no comfort
there.

What fame? I am not Raphael,
Titian—no

Nor even a Sir Joshua, some will cry.
Wrong there! The painter's fame? but
mine, that grew

Blown into glittering by the popular
breath,

May float awhile beneath the sun, may
roll

The rainbow hues of heaven about it—
There!

The colour'd bubble bursts above the
abyss

Of Darkness, utter Lethe.

Is it so?

Her sad eyes plead for my own fame
with me

To make it dearer.

Look, the sun has risen
To flame along another dreary day.

Your hand. How bright you keep your
marriage-ring!

Raise me. I thank you.

Has your opiate then
Bred this black mood? or am I conscious,
more

Than other Masters, of the chasm
between

Work and Ideal? Or does the gloom
of Age

And suffering cloud the height I stand
upon

Even from myself? stand? stood . . .
no more.

And yet
The world would lose, if such a wife as
you

Should vanish unrecorded. Might I
crave

One favour? I am bankrupt of all claim
On your obedience, and my strongest
wish

Falls flat before your least unwillingness.
Still would you—if it please you—sit
to me?

I dream'd last night of that clear
summer noon,

When seated on a rock, and foot to foot
With your own shadow in the placid lake,
You claspt our infant daughter, heart to
heart.

I had been among the hills, and brought
you down

A length of staghorn-moss, and this you
twined

About her cap. I see the picture yet,
Mother and child. A sound from far
away,

No louder than a bee among the flowers,
A fall of water lull'd the noon asleep.

You still'd it for the moment with a song
Which often echo'd in me, while I stood
Before the great Madonna-masterpieces
Of ancient Art in Paris, or in Rome.

Mary, my crayons! if I can, I will.
You should have been—I might have
made you once,

Had I but known you as I know you
now—

The true Alcestis of the time. Your
song—

Sit, listen! I remember it, a proof
That I—even I—at times remember'd
you.

'Beat upon mine, little heart! beat,
beat!

Beat upon mine! you are mine, my
sweet!

All mine from your pretty blue eyes
to your feet,

My sweet.'

Less profile! turn to me—three-quarter
face.

'Sleep, little blossom, my honey, my
bliss!

For I give you this, and I give you
this!

And I blind your pretty blue eyes with
a kiss!

Sleep!'

Too early blinded by the kiss of death—

'Father and Mother will watch you
grow'—

You watch'd not I, she did not grow,
she died.

'Father and Mother will watch you
grow,

And gather the roses whenever they
blow,

And find the white heather wherever
you go,

My sweet.'

Ah, my white heather only blooms in
heaven

With Milton's amaranth. There, there,
there! a child

Had shamed me at it—Down, you idle
tools,

Stamp't into dust—tremulous, all awry,
Blurr'd like a landskip in a ruffled pool,—
Not one stroke firm. This Art, that
harlot-like

Seduced me from you, leaves me harlot-
like,

Who love her still, and whimper, im-
potent

To win her back before I die—and
then—

Then, in the loud world's bastard judg-
ment-day,

One truth will damn me with the mind-
less mob,

Who feel no touch of my temptation,
more

Than all the myriad lies, that blacken
round

The corpse of every man that gains a
name;

'This model husband, this fine Artist'!
Fool,

What matters? Six foot deep of burial
mould

Will dull their comments! Ay, but when
the shout

Of His descending peals from Heaven,
and throbs

Thro' earth, and all her graves, if *He*
should ask

'Why left you wife and children? for
my sake,

According to my word?' and I replied

'Nay, Lord, for *Art*,' why that would
sound so mean

That all the dead, who wait the doom of
Hell

For bolder sins than mine, adulteries,
Wife-murders,—nay, the ruthless Mussul-
man

Who flings his bowstrung Harem in the
sea,

Would turn, and glare at me, and point
and jeer,

And gibber at the worm, who, living,
made

The wife of wives a widow-bride, and
lost

Salvation for a sketch.

I am wild again!

The coals of fire you heap upon my head
Have crazed me. Someone knocking
there without?

No! Will my Indian brother come? to
find

Me or my coffin? Should I know the
man?

This worn-out Reason dying in her house

May leave the windows blinded, and if
so,

Bid him farewell for me, and tell him—
Hope!

I hear a death-bed Angel whisper 'Hope.'
"The miserable have no medicine
But only Hope!" He said it . . . in
the play.

His crime was of the senses; of the mind
Mine; worse, cold, calculated.

Tell my son—
O let me lean my head upon your breast.
'Beat little heart' on this fool brain of
mine.

I once had friends—and many—none
like you.

I love you more than when we married.
Hope!

O yes, I hope, or fancy that, perhaps,
Human forgiveness touches heaven, and
thence—

For you forgive me, you are sure of that—
Reflected, sends a light on the forgiven.

PARNASSUS

Exegi monumentum . . .

Quod non . . .

Possit diruere . . .

. . . innumerabilis

Annorum series et fuga temporum.—HORACE.

I

WHAT be those crown'd forms high over
the sacred fountain?

Bards, that the mighty Muses have raised
to the heights of the mountain,

And over the flight of the Ages! O
Goddesses, help me up thither!

Lightning may shrivel the laurel of
Cæsar, but mine would not wither.

Steep is the mountain, but you, you will
help me to overcome it,

And stand with my head in the zenith,
and roll my voice from the summit,

Sounding for ever and ever thro' Earth
and her listening nations,

And mixt with the great Sphere-music of
stars and of constellations.

II

What be those two shapes high over the
sacred fountain,

Taller than all the Muses, and huger
than all the mountain?

On those two known peaks they stand
ever spreading and heightening;

Poet, that evergreen laurel is blasted by
more than lightning!

Look, in their deep double shadow the
crown'd ones all disappearing!

Sing like a bird and be happy, nor hope
for a deathless hearing!

'Sounding for ever and ever?' pass on!
the sight confuses—

These are Astronomy and Geology, ter-
rible Muses!

III

If the lips were touch'd with fire from off
a pure Pierian altar,

Tho' their music here be mortal need the
singer greatly care?

Other songs for other worlds! the fire
within him would not falter;

Let the golden Iliad vanish, Homer here
is Homer there.

BY AN EVOLUTIONIST

THE Lord let the house of a brute to the
soul of a man,

And the man said 'Am I your debtor?'

And the Lord—'Not yet: but make it
as clean as you can,

And then I will let you a better.'

I

If my body come from brutes, my soul
uncertain, or a fable,

Why not bask amid the senses while
the sun of morning shines,

I, the finer brute rejoicing in my hounds,
and in my stable,

Youth and Health, and birth and
wealth, and choice of women and
of wines?

II

What hast thou done for me, grim Old
Age, save breaking my bones on
the rack?

Would I had past in the morning that
looks so bright from afar!

OLD AGE

Done for thee? starved the wild beast
that was linkt with thee eighty
years back.

Less weight now for the ladder-of-
heaven that hangs on a star.

I

If my body come from brutes, tho'
somewhat finer than their own,

I am heir, and this my kingdom.
Shall the royal voice be mute?

No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag
me from the throne,

Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and
rule thy Province of the brute.

II

I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and
I gaze at a field in the Past,

Where I sank with the body at times
in the sloughs of a low desire,

But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the
Man is quiet at last

As he stands on the heights of his life
with a glimpse of a height that is
higher.

FAR—FAR—AWAY

(FOR MUSIC)

WHAT sight so lured him thro' the fields
he knew

As where earth's green stole into heaven's
own hue,

Far—far—away?

What sound was dearest in his native dells?
The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells

Far—far—away.

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain
or joy,

Thro' those three words would haunt him
when a boy,

Far—far—away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a
breath

From some fair dawn beyond the doors
of death

Far—far—away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of
Birth,

The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,
Far—far—away?

What charm in words, a charm no words
could give?

O dying words, can Music make you live
Far—far—away?

POLITICS

WE move, the wheel must always move,
Nor always on the plain;

And if we move to such a goal

As Wisdom hopes to gain,

Then you that drive, and know your Craft,
Will firmly hold the rein,

Nor lend an ear to random cries,

Or you may drive in vain,

For some cry 'Quick' and some cry
'Slow,'

But, while the hills remain,

Up hill 'Too-slow' will need the whip,

Down hill 'Too-quick,' the chain.

BEAUTIFUL CITY

BEAUTIFUL city, the centre and crater
of European confusion,

O you with your passionate shriek for
the rights of an equal humanity,

How often your Re-volution has proven
but E-volution

Roll'd again back on itself in the tides of
a civic insanity!

THE ROSES ON THE TERRACE

ROSE, on this terrace fifty years ago,
 When I was in my June, you in your
 May,
 Two words, 'My Rose' set all your face
 aglow,
 And now that I am white, and you are
 gray,
 That blush of fifty years ago, my dear,
 Blooms in the Past, but close to me
 to-day
 As this red rose, which on our terrace here
 Glows in the blue of fifty miles away.

THE PLAY

ACT first, this Earth, a stage so gloom'd
 with woe
 You all but sicken at the shifting scenes.
 And yet be patient. Our Playwright
 may show
 In some fifth Act what this wild Drama
 means.

ON ONE WHO AFFECTED AN EFFEMINATE MANNER

WHILE man and woman still are incom-
 plete,
 I prize that soul where man and woman
 meet,
 Which types all Nature's male and female
 plan,
 But, friend, man-woman is not woman-
 man.

TO ONE WHO RAN DOWN THE ENGLISH

You make our faults too gross, and thence
 maintain
 Our darker future. May your fears be
 vain !
 At times the small black fly upon the pane
 May seem the black ox of the distant plain.

THE SNOWDROP

MANY, many welcomes
 February fair-maid,
 Ever as of old time,
 Solitary firstling,
 Coming in the cold time,
 Prophet of the gay time,
 Prophet of the May time,
 Prophet of the roses,
 Many, many welcomes
 February fair-maid !

THE THROSTLE

'SUMMER is coming, summer is coming.
 I know it, I know it, I know it.
 Light again, leaf again, life again, love
 again,'
 Yes, my wild little Poet.

Sing the new year in under the blue.
 Last year you sang it as gladly.
 'New, new, new, new' ! Is it then *so*
 new
 That you should carol so madly ?

'Love again, song again, nest again, young
 again,'
 Never a prophet so crazy !
 And hardly a daisy as yet, little friend,
 See, there is hardly a daisy.

'Here again, here, here, here, happy
 year' !
 O warble unchidden, unbidden !
 Summer is coming, is coming, my dear,
 And all the winters are hidden.

THE OAK

LIVE thy Life,
 Young and old,
 Like yon oak,
 Bright in spring,
 Living gold ;

Summer-rich
Then ; and then
Autumn-changed,
Soberer-hued
Gold again.

All his leaves
Fall'n at length,
Look, he stands,
Trunk and bough,
Naked strength.

IN MEMORIAM

W. G. WARD

FAREWELL, whose living like I shall
not find,
Whose Faith and Work were bells of
full accord,
My friend, the most unworldly of man-
kind,
Most generous of all Ultramontanes,
Ward,
How subtle at tierce and quart of mind
with mind,
How loyal in the following of thy
Lord !

THE DEATH OF CENONE

AND OTHER POEMS

JUNE BRACKEN AND HEATHER

To E. T.

THERE on the top of the down,
The wild heather round me and over me
 June's high blue,
When I look'd at the bracken so bright
 and the heather so brown,
I thought to myself I would offer this
 book to you,
This, and my love together,
To you that are seventy-seven,
With a faith as clear as the heights of
 the June-blue heaven,
And a fancy as summer-new
As the green of the bracken amid the
 gloom of the heather.

TO THE MASTER OF BALLIOL

I

DEAR Master in our classic town,
You, loved by all the younger gown
 There at Balliol,
Lay your Plato for one minute down,

II

And read a Grecian tale re-told,
Which, cast in later Grecian mould,
 Quintus Calaber
Somewhat lazily handled of old;

III

And on this white midwinter day—
For have the far-off hymns of May,
 All her melodies,
All her harmonies echo'd away?—

IV

To-day, before you turn again
To thoughts that lift the soul of men,
 Hear my cataract's
Downward thunder in hollow and glen,

V

Till, led by dream and vague desire,
The woman, gliding toward the pyre,
 Find her warrior
Stark and dark in his funeral fire.

THE DEATH OF CENONE

CENONE sat within the cave from out
Whose ivy-matted mouth she used to gaze
Down at the Troad; but the goodly view
Was now one blank, and all the serpent
 vines
Which on the touch of heavenly feet had
 risen,
And gliding thro' the branches over-
 bower'd
The naked Three, were wither'd long
 ago,
And thro' the sunless winter morning-
 mist
In silence wept upon the flowerless earth.
And while she stared at those dead
 cords that ran
Dark thro' the mist, and linking tree to
 tree,
But once were gayer than a dawning sky
With many a pendent bell and fragrant
 star,
Her Past became her Present, and she
 saw
Him, climbing toward her with the
 golden fruit,
Him, happy to be chosen Judge of Gods,
Her husband in the flush of youth and
 dawn,
Paris, himself as beauteous as a God.

Anon from out the long ravine below,
She heard a wailing cry, that seem'd at
first

Thin as the batlike shrillings of the Dead
When driven to Hades, but, in coming
near,

Across the downward thunder of the
brook

Sounded 'Cenone'; and on a sudden he,
Paris, no longer beauteous as a God,
Struck by a poison'd arrow in the fight,
Lame, crooked, reeling, livid, thro' the
mist

Rose, like the wraith of his dead self,
and moan'd

'Cenone, my Cenone, while we dwelt
Together in this valley—happy then—
Too happy had I died within thine
arms,

Before the feud of Gods had marr'd our
peace,

And sunder'd each from each. I am
dying now

Pierced by a poison'd dart. Save me.
Thou knowest,

Taught by some God, whatever herb or
balm

May clear the blood from poison, and
thy fame

Is blown thro' all the Troad, and to thee
The shepherd brings his adder-bitten
lamb,

The wounded warrior climbs from Troy
to thee.

My life and death are in thy hand. The
Gods

Avenge on stony hearts a fruitless prayer
For pity. Let me owe my life to thee.

I wrought thee bitter wrong, but thou
forgive,

Forget it. Man is but the slave of Fate.
Cenone, by thy love which once was
mine,

Help, heal me. I am poison'd to the
heart.'

'And I to mine' she said 'Adulterer,
Go back to thine adulteress and die!'

He groan'd, he turn'd, and in the mist
at once

Became a shadow, sank and disappear'd,

But, ere the mountain rolls into the plain,
Fell headlong dead; and of the shepherds
one

Their oldest, and the same who first had
found

Paris, a naked babe, among the woods
Of Ida, following lighted on him there,
And shouted, and the shepherds heard
and came.

One raised the Prince, one sleek'd the
squalid hair,

One kiss'd his hand, another closed his
eyes,

And then, remembering the gay playmate
rear'd

Among them, and forgetful of the man,
Whose crime had half unpeopled Ilium,
these

All that day long labour'd, hewing the
pines,

And built their shepherd-prince a funeral
pile;

And, while the star of eve was drawing
light

From the dead sun, kindled the pyre,
and all

Stood round it, hush'd, or calling on his
name.

But when the white fog vanish'd like
a ghost

Before the day, and every topmost pine
Spired into bluest heaven, still in her
cave,

Amazed, and ever seeming stared upon
By ghastlier than the Gorgon head, a
face,—

His face deform'd by lurid blotch and
blain—

There, like a creature frozen to the heart
Beyond all hope of warmth, Cenone sat
Not moving, till in front of that ravine
Which drowsed in gloom, self-darken'd
from the west,

The sunset blazed along the wall of Troy.

Then her head sank, she slept, and
thro' her dream

A ghostly murmur floated, 'Come to me,
Cenone! I can wrong thee now no
more,

Cenone, my Cenone,' and the dream

Wail'd in her, when she woke beneath
the stars.

What star could burn so low? not
Ilion yet.

What light was there? She rose and
slowly down,

By the long torrent's ever-deepen'd roar,
Paced, following, as in trance, the silent
cry.

She waked a bird of prey that scream'd
and past;

She roused a snake that hissing writhed
away;

A panther sprang across her path, she
heard

The shriek of some lost life among the
pines,

But when she gain'd the broader vale,
and saw

The ring of faces redden'd by the flames
Enfolding that dark body which had lain
Of old in her embrace, paused—and then
ask'd

Falteringly, 'Who lies on yonder pyre?'
But every man was mute for reverence.

Then moving quickly forward till the heat
Smote on her brow, she lifted up a voice
Of shrill command, 'Who burns upon
the pyre?'

Whereon their oldest and their boldest
said,

'He, whom thou wouldst not heal!' and
all at once

The morning light of happy marriage
broke

Thro' all the clouded years of widowhood,
And muffling up her comely head, and
crying

'Husband!' she leapt upon the funeral
pile,

And mixt herself with *him* and past in
fire.

ST. TELEMACHUS

HAD the fierce ashes of some fiery peak
Been hurl'd so high they ranged about
the globe?

For day by day, thro' many a blood-red
eve,

In that four-hundredth summer after
Christ,

The wrathful sunset glared against a cross
Rear'd on the tumbled ruins of an old
fane

No longer sacred to the Sun, and flamed
On one huge slope beyond, where in his
cave

The man, whose pious hand had built
the cross,

A man who never changed a word with
men,

Fasted and pray'd, Telemachus the Saint.

Eve after eve that haggard anchorite
Would haunt the desolated fane, and
there

Gaze at the ruin, often mutter low

'Vicisti Galilæe'; louder again,

Spurning a shatter'd fragment of the
God,

'Vicisti Galilæe!' but—when now

Bathed in that lurid crimson—ask'd 'Is
earth

On fire to the West? or is the Demon-
god

Wroth at his fall?' and heard an answer
'Wake

Thou deedless dreamer, lazying out a life
Of self-suppression, not of selfless love.'

And once a flight of shadowy fighters
crost

The disk, and once, he thought, a shape
with wings

Came sweeping by him, and pointed to
the West,

And at his ear he heard a whisper
'Rome'

And in his heart he cried 'The call of
God!'

And call'd arose, and, slowly plunging
down

Thro' that disastrous glory, set his face
By waste and field and town of alien
tongue,

Following a hundred sunsets, and the
sphere

Of westward-wheeling stars; and every
dawn

Struck from him his own shadow on to
Rome.

Foot-sore, way-worn, at length he
 touch'd his goal,
 The Christian city. All her splendour
 fail'd
 To lure those eyes that only yearn'd to
 see,
 Fleeting betwixt her column'd palace-
 walls,
 The shape with wings. Anon there past
 a crowd
 With shameless laughter, Pagan oath,
 and jest,
 Hard Romans brawling of their mon-
 strous games ;
 He, all but deaf thro' age and wear-
 ness,
 And muttering to himself 'The call of
 God'
 And borne along by that full stream of
 men,
 Like some old wreck on some indrawing
 sea,
 Gain'd their huge Colosseum. The caged
 beast
 Yell'd, as he yell'd of yore for Christian
 blood.
 Three slaves were trailing a dead lion
 away,
 One, a dead man. He stumbled in, and
 sat
 Blinded ; but when the momentary gloom,
 Made by the noonday blaze without, had
 left
 His aged eyes, he raised them, and
 beheld
 A blood-red awning waver overhead,
 The dust send up a steam of human
 blood,
 The gladiators moving toward their fight,
 And eighty thousand Christian faces
 watch
 Man murder man. A sudden strength
 from heaven,
 As some great shock may wake a palsied
 limb,
 Turn'd him again to boy, for up he
 sprang,
 And glided lightly down the stairs, and
 o'er

The barrier that divided beast from man
 Slipt, and ran on, and flung himself
 between
 The gladiatorial swords, and call'd 'For-
 bear
 In the great name of Him who died for
 men,
 Christ Jesus !' For one moment after-
 ward
 A silence follow'd as of death, and then
 A hiss as from a wilderness of snakes,
 Then one deep roar as of a breaking sea,
 And then a shower of stones that stoned
 him dead,
 And then once more a silence as of death.
 His dream became a deed that woke
 the world,
 For while the frantic rabble in half-amaze
 Stared at him dead, thro' all the nobler
 hearts
 In that vast Oval ran a shudder of shame.
 The Baths, the Forum gabbled of his
 death,
 And preachers linger'd o'er his dying
 words,
 Which would not die, but echo'd on to
 reach
 Honorius, till he heard them, and de-
 creed
 That Rome no more should wallow in
 this old lust
 Of Paganism, and make her festal hour
 Dark with the blood of man who mur-
 der'd man.

[For Honorius, who succeeded to the sov-
 ereignty over Europe, suppress the gladiatorial
 combats practised of old in Rome, on occasion
 of the following event. There was one Tele-
 machus, embracing the ascetic mode of life, who
 setting out from the East and arriving at Rome
 for this very purpose, while that accursed spec-
 tacle was being performed, entered himself the
 circus, and descending into the arena, attempted
 to hold back those who wielded deadly weapons
 against each other. The spectators of the mur-
 derous fray, possessed with the drunken glee of
 the demon who delights in such bloodshed, stoned
 to death the preacher of peace. The admirable
 Emperor learning this put a stop to that evil ex-
 hibition.—Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History*.]

AKBAR'S DREAM

AN INSCRIPTION BY ABUL FAZL FOR
A TEMPLE IN KASHMIR (Bloch-
mann xxxii.).

O GOD in every temple I see people that
see thee, and in every language I hear
spoken, people praise thee.

Polytheism and Islâm feel after thee.

Each religion says, 'Thou art one, with-
out equal.'

If it be a mosque people murmur the
holy prayer, and if it be a Christian Church,
people ring the bell from love to Thee.

Sometimes I frequent the Christian
cloister, and sometimes the mosque.

But it is thou whom I search from
temple to temple.

Thy elect have no dealings with either
heresy or orthodoxy; for neither of them
stands behind the screen of thy truth.

Heresy to the heretic, and religion to
the orthodox.

But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to
the heart of the perfume seller.

AKBAR and ABUL FAZL before the palace
at Futehpur-Sikri at night.

'LIGHT of the nations' ask'd his
Chronicler

Of Akbar 'what has darken'd thee to-
night?'

Then, after one quick glance upon the
stars,

And turning slowly toward him, Akbar
said

'The shadow of a dream—an idle one
It may be. Still I raised my heart to
heaven,

I pray'd against the dream. To pray,
to do—

To pray, to do according to the prayer,
Are, both, to worship Alla, but the
prayers,

That have no successor in deed, are faint
And pale in Alla's eyes, fair mothers
they

Dying in childbirth of dead sons. I vow'd
Whate'er my dreams, I still would do
the right

Thro' all the vast dominion which a sword,
That only conquers men to conquer
peace,

Has won me. Alla be my guide!

But come,

My noble friend, my faithful counsellor,
Sit by my side. While thou art one
with me,

I seem no longer like a lonely man
In the king's garden, gathering here and
there

From each fair plant the blossom choicest-
grown

To wreath a crown not only for the
king

But in due time for every Mussulmân,
Brahmin, and Buddhist, Christian, and
Parsee,

Thro' all the warring world of Hindustan.

Well spake thy brother in his hymn to
heaven

"Thy glory baffles wisdom. All the
tracks

Of science making toward Thy Perfect-
ness

Are blinding desert sand; we scarce can
spell

The Alif of Thine alphabet of Love."

He knows Himself, men nor themselves
nor Him,

For every splinter'd fraction of a sect
Will clamour "I am on the Perfect Way,
All else is to perdition."

Shall the rose
Cry to the lotus "No flower thou"? the
palm

Call to the cypress "I alone am fair"?
The mango spurn the melon at his foot?
"Mine is the one fruit Alla made for
man."

Look how the living pulse of Alla beats
Thro' all His world. If every single star
Should shriek its claim "I only am in
heaven"

Why that were such sphere-music as the
Greek

Had hardly dream'd of. There is light
in all,

And light, with more or less of shade,
in all

Man-modes of worship ; but our Ulama,
 Who "sitting on green sofas contem-
 plate
 The torment of the damn'd" already,
 these
 Are like wild brutes new-caged—the
 narrower
 The cage, the more their fury. Me they
 front
 With sullen brows. What wonder ! I
 decreed
 That even the dog was clean, that men
 may taste
 Swine-flesh, drink wine ; they know too
 that whene'er
 In our free Hall, where each philosophy
 And mood of faith may hold its own,
 they blurt
 Their furious formalisms, I but hear
 The clash of tides that meet in narrow
 seas.—
 Not the Great Voice not the true Deep.
 To drive
 A people from their ancient fold of Faith,
 And wall them up perforce in mine—
 unwise,
 Unkinglike ;—and the morning of my
 reign
 Was reddened by that cloud of shame
 when I . . .
 I hate the rancour of their castes and
 creeds,
 I let men worship as they will, I reap
 No revenue from the field of unbelief.
 I cull from every faith and race the best
 And bravest soul for counsellor and
 friend.
 I loathe the very name of infidel.
 I stagger at the Korân and the sword.
 I shudder at the Christian and the stake ;
 Yet "Alla," says their sacred book, "is
 Love,"
 And when the Goan Padre quoting Him,
 Issa Ben Mariam, his own prophet, cried
 "Love one another little ones" and
 "bless"
 Whom ? even "your persecutors" ! there
 methought
 The cloud was rifted by a purer gleam
 Than glances from the sun of our Islâm.

And thou rememberest what a fury
 shook
 Those pillars of a moulder'd faith, when
 he,
 That other, prophet of their fall, pro-
 claimed
 His Master as "the Sun of Righteous-
 ness,"
 Yea, Alla here on earth, who caught
 and held
 His people by the bridle-rein of Truth.
 What art thou saying ? "And was
 not Alla call'd
 In old Irân the Sun of Love ? and Love
 The net of truth ?"
 A voice from old Irân !
 Nay, but I know it—*his*, the hoary Sheik,
 On whom the women shrieking "Atheist"
 flung
 Filth from the roof, the mystic melodist
 Who all but lost himself in Alla, him
 Abû Saïd——
 —a sun but dimly seen
 Here, till the mortal morning mists of
 earth
 Fade in the noon of heaven, when creed
 and race
 Shall bear false witness, each of each, no
 more,
 But find their limits by that larger light,
 And overstep them, moving easily
 Thro' after-ages in the love of Truth,
 The truth of Love.
 The sun, the sun ! they rail
 At me the Zoroastrian. Let the Sun,
 Who heats our earth to yield us grain
 and fruit,
 And laughs upon thy field as well as
 mine,
 And warms the blood of Shiah and
 Sunnee,
 Symbol the Eternal ! Yea and may not
 kings
 Express Him also by their warmth of
 love
 For all they rule—by equal law for all ?
 By deeds a light to men ?
 But no such light
 Glanced from our Presence on the face
 of one,

Who breaking in upon us yesternorn,
With all the Hells a-glare in either eye,
Yell'd "hast *thou* brought us down a
new Korân

From heaven? art *thou* the Prophet?
canst *thou* work

Miracles?" and the wild horse, anger,
plunged

To fling me, and fail'd. Miracles! no,
not I

Nor he, nor any. I can but lift the torch
Of Reason in the dusky cave of Life,
And gaze on this great miracle, the
World,

Adoring That who made, and makes,
and is,

And is not, what I gaze on—all else
Form,

Ritual, varying with the tribes of men.

Ay but, my friend, thou knowest I
hold that forms

Are needful: only let the hand that rules,
With politic care, with utter gentleness,
Mould them for all his people.

And what are forms?

Fair garments, plain or rich, and fitting
close

Or flying looselier, warm'd but by the
heart

Within them, moved but by the living
limb,

And cast aside, when old, for newer,—
Forms!

The Spiritual in Nature's market-place—
The silent Alphabet-of-heaven-in-man
Made vocal—banners blazoning a Power
That is not seen and rules from far away—
A silken cord let down from Paradise,
When fine Philosophies would fail, to
draw

The crowd from wallowing in the mire
of earth,

And all the more, when these behold
their Lord,

Who shaped the forms, obey them; and
himself

Here on this bank in *some* way live the
life

Beyond the bridge, and serve that Infinite
Within us, as without, that All-in-all,

And over all, the never-changing One
And ever-changing Many, in praise of
Whom

The Christian bell, the cry from off the
mosque,

And vaguer voices of Polytheism

Make but one music, harmonising
"Pray."

There westward—under yon slow-
falling star,

The Christians own a Spiritual Head;
And following thy true counsel, by thine
aid,

Myself am such in our Islâm, for no
Mirage of glory, but for power to fuse
My myriads into union under one;

To hunt the tiger of oppression out
From office; and to spread the Divine
Faith

Like calming oil on all their stormy
creeds,

And fill the hollows between wave and
wave;

To nurse my children on the milk of
Truth,

And alchemise old hates into the gold
Of Love, and make it current; and beat
back

The menacing poison of intolerant priests,
Those cobras ever setting up their hoods—
One Alla! one Kalifa!

Still—at times

A doubt, a fear,—and yester afternoon
I dream'd,—thou knowest how deep a
well of love

My heart is for my son, Saleem, mine
heart,—

And yet so wild and wayward that my
dream—

He glares askance at thee as one of those
Who mix the wines of heresy in the cup
Of counsel—so—I pray thee—

Well, I dream'd

That stone by stone I rear'd a sacred
fane,

A temple, neither Pagod, Mosque, nor
Church,

But loftier, simpler, always open-door'd
To every breath from heaven, and Truth
and Peace

And Love and Justice came and dwelt
therein ;

But while we stood rejoicing, I and thou,
I heard a mocking laugh "the new
Korân !"

And on the sudden, and with a cry
"Saleem"

Thou, thou—I saw thee fall before me,
and then

Me too the black-wing'd Azrael over-
came,

But Death had ears and eyes ; I watch'd
my son,

And those that follow'd, loosen, stone
from stone,

All my fair work ; and from the ruin
arose

The shriek and curse of trampled millions,
even

As in the time before ; but while I
groan'd,

From out the sunset pour'd an alien race,
Who fitted stone to stone again, and
Truth,

Peace, Love and Justice came and dwelt
therein,

Nor in the field without were seen or
heard

Fires of Súttee, nor wail of baby-wife,
Or Indian widow ; and in sleep I said
"All praise to Alla by whatever hands
My mission be accomplish'd !" but we
hear

Music : our palace is awake, and morn
Has lifted the dark eyelash of the Night
From off the rosy cheek of waking Day.
Our hymn to the sun. They sing it.
Let us go.'

HYMN

I

Once again thou flamest heavenward,
once again we see thee rise.

Every morning is thy birthday gladdening
human hearts and eyes.

Every morning here we greet it,
bowing lowly down before thee,

Thce the Godlike, thee the changeless in
thine ever-changing skies.

II

Shadow-maker, shadow-slayer, arrowing
light from clime to clime,

Hear thy myriad laureates hail thee
monarch in their woodland rhyme.

Warble bird, and open flower, and,
men, below the dome of azure

Kneel adoring Him the Timeless in the
flame that measures Time !

NOTES TO AKBAR'S DREAM

The great Mogul Emperor Akbar was born October 14, 1542, and died 1605. At 13 he succeeded his father Humayun ; at 18 he himself assumed the sole charge of government. He subdued and ruled over fifteen large provinces ; his empire included all India north of the Vindhya Mountains—in the south of India he was not so successful. His tolerance of religions and his abhorrence of religious persecution put our Tudors to shame. He invented a new eclectic religion by which he hoped to unite all creeds, castes and peoples : and his legislation was remarkable for vigour, justice and humanity.

'*Thy glory baffles wisdom.*' The Emperor quotes from a hymn to the Deity by Faizi, brother of Abul Fazl, Akbar's chief friend and minister, who wrote the *Ain i Akbari* (Annals of Akbar). His influence on his age was immense. It may be that he and his brother Faizi led Akbar's mind away from Islâm and the Prophet—this charge is brought against him by every Muhammadan writer ; but Abul Fazl also led his sovereign to a true appreciation of his duties, and from the moment that he entered Court, the problem of successfully ruling over mixed races, which Islâm in few other countries had to solve, was carefully considered, and the policy of toleration was the result (Blochmann xxix.).

Abul Fazl thus gives an account of himself 'The advice of my Father with difficulty kept me back from acts of folly ; my mind had no rest and my heart felt itself drawn to the sages of Mongolia or to the hermits on Lebanon. I longed for interviews with the Llamás of Tibet or with the padres of Portugal, and I would gladly sit with the priests of the Parsis and the learned of the Zendavesta. I was sick of the learned of my own land.'

He became the intimate friend and adviser of Akbar, and helped him in his tolerant system of government. Professor Blochmann writes 'Impressed with a favourable idea of the value of his Hindu subjects, he (Akbar) had resolved when pensively sitting in the evenings on the solitary

stone at Futehpur-Sikri to rule with an even hand all men in his dominions; but as the extreme views of the learned and the lawyers continually urged him to persecute instead of to heal, he instituted discussions, because, believing himself to be in error, he thought it his duty as ruler to inquire.' 'These discussions took place every Thursday night in the Ibadat-khana a building at Futehpur-Sikri, erected for the purpose' (Malleeson).

In these discussions Abul Fazl became a great power, and he induced the chief of the disputants to draw up a document defining the 'divine Faith' as it was called, and assigning to Akbar the rank of a Mujahid, or supreme khalifah, the vicegerent of the one true God.

Abul Fazl was finally murdered at the instigation of Akbar's son Salim, who in his Memoirs declares that it was Abul Fazl who had perverted his father's mind so that he denied the divine mission of Mahomet, and turned away his love from his son.

Faizi. When Akbar conquered the North-West Provinces of India, Faizi, then 20, began his life as a poet, and earned his living as a physician. He is reported to have been very generous and to have treated the poor for nothing. His fame reached Akbar's ears who commanded him to come to the camp at Chitor. Akbar was delighted with his varied knowledge and scholarship and made the poet teacher to his sons. Faizi at 33 was appointed Chief Poet (1588). He collected a fine library of 4300 MSS. and died at the age of 40 (1595) when Akbar incorporated his collection of rare books in the Imperial Library.

The warring world of Hindustan. Akbar's rapid conquests and the good government of his fifteen provinces with their complete military, civil and political systems make him conspicuous among the great kings of history.

The Goan Padre. Abul Fazl relates that 'one night the Ibadat-khana was brightened by the presence of Padre Rodolpho, who for intelligence and wisdom was unrivalled among Christian doctors. Several carping and bigoted men attacked him and this afforded an opportunity for the display of the calm judgment and justice of the assembly. These men brought forward the old received assertions, and did not attempt to arrive at truth by reasoning. Their statements were torn to pieces, and they were nearly put to shame, when they began to attack the contradictions of the Gospel, but they could not prove their assertions. With perfect calmness, and earnest conviction of the truth he replied to their arguments.'

Abū Sa'īd. 'Love is the net of Truth, Love is the noose of God' is a quotation from the great Sufee poet Abū Sa'īd—born A.D. 968, died at the age of 83. He is a mystical poet, and some of his expressions have been compared to our George Herbert. Of Shaikh Abū Sa'īd it is recorded that he said, 'when my affairs had reached a certain pitch I buried under the dust my books and opened a shop on my own account (*i.e.* began to teach with authority), and verily men represented me as that which I was not, until it came to this, that they went to the Qādhi and testified against me of unbelief; and women got upon the roofs and cast unclean things upon me.' (*Vide* reprint from article in *National Review*, March 1891, by C. J. Pickering.)

Aziz. I am not aware that there is any record of such intrusion upon the king's privacy, but the expressions in the text occur in a letter sent by Akbar's foster-brother Aziz, who refused to come to court when summoned and threw up his government, and 'after writing an insolent and reproachful letter to Akbar in which he asked him if he had received a book from heaven, or if he could work miracles like Mahomet that he presumed to introduce a new religion, warned him that he was on the way to eternal perdition, and concluded with a prayer to God to bring him back into the path of salvation' (Elphinstone).

'The Koran, the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David are called *books* by way of excellence, and their followers "People of the Book"' (Elphinstone).

Akbar according to Abdel Kadir had his son Murad instructed in the Gospel, and used to make him begin his lessons 'In the name of Christ' instead of in the usual way 'In the name of God.'

To drive

A people from their ancient fold of Truth, etc. Malleeson says 'This must have happened because Akbar states it, but of the forced conversions I have found no record. This must have taken place whilst he was still a minor, and whilst the chief authority was wielded by Bairam.'

'I reap no revenue from the field of unbelief.' The Hindus are fond of pilgrimages and Akbar removed a remunerative tax raised by his predecessors on pilgrimages. He also abolished the *fezza* or capitation tax on those who differed from the Mahomedan faith. He discouraged all *excessive* prayers, fasts and pilgrimages.

Suttee. Akbar decreed that every widow who showed the least desire not to be burnt on her

husband's funeral pyre, should be let go free and unharmed.

baby-wife. He forbad marriage before the age of puberty.

Indian widow. Akbar ordained that re-marriage was lawful.

Music. 'About a watch before daybreak,' says Abul Fazl, the musicians played to the king in the palace. 'His Majesty had such a knowledge of the science of music as trained musicians do not possess.'

'*The Divine Faith.*' The Divine Faith slowly passed away under the immediate successors of Akbar. An idea of what the Divine Faith was may be gathered from the inscription at the head of the poem. The document referred to, Abul Fazl says 'brought about excellent results (1) the Court became a gathering place of the sages and learned of all creeds; the good doctrines of all religious systems were recognized, and their defects were not allowed to obscure their good features; (2) perfect toleration or peace with all was established; and (3) the perverse and evil-minded were covered with shame on seeing the disinterested motives of His Majesty, and these stood in the pillory of disgrace.' Dated September 1579—Ragab 987 (Blochmann xiv.).

THE BANDIT'S DEATH

TO SIR WALTER SCOTT ¹

O GREAT AND GALLANT SCOTT,
TRUE GENTLEMAN, HEART, BLOOD AND BONE,
I WOULD IT HAD BEEN MY LOT
TO HAVE SEEN THEE, AND HEARD THEE, AND
KNOWN.

SIR, do you see this dagger? nay, why
do you start aside?

I was not going to stab you, tho' I *am*
the Bandit's bride.

You have set a price on his head: I may
claim it without a lie.

What have I here in the cloth? I will
show it you by-and-by.

¹ I have adopted Sir Walter Scott's version of the following story as given in his last journal (Death of Il Bizarro)—but I have taken the liberty of making some slight alterations.

Sir, I was once a wife. I had one brief
summer of bliss.

But the Bandit had woo'd me in vain,
and he stabb'd my Piero with this.

And he dragg'd me up there to his cave
in the mountain, and there one
day

He had left his dagger behind him. I
found it. I hid it away.

For he reek'd with the blood of Piero;
his kisses were red with his crime,
And I cried to the Saints to avenge me.
They heard, they bided their time.

In a while I bore him a son, and he
loved to dandle the child,
And that was a link between us; but I
—to be reconciled?—

No, by the Mother of God, tho' I think
I hated him less,
And—well, if I sinn'd last night, I will
find the Priest and confess.

Listen! we three were alone in the dell
at the close of the day.

I was lilting a song to the babe, and it
laugh'd like a dawn in May.

Then on a sudden we saw your soldiers
crossing the ridge,
And he caught my little one from me:
we dipt down under the bridge

By the great dead pine—you know it—
and heard as we crouch'd below,
The clatter of arms, and voices, and men
passing to and fro.

Black was the night when we crept away
—not a star in the sky—
Hush'd as the heart of the grave, till the
little one utter'd a cry.

I whisper'd 'give it to me,' but he would
not answer me—then
He gript it so hard by the throat that
the boy never cried again.

We return'd to his cave—the link was
broken—he sobb'd and he wept,
And cursed himself; then he yawn'd, for
the wretch *could* sleep, and he
slept

Ay, till dawn stole into the cave, and a
ray red as blood

Glanced on the strangled face—I could
make Sleep Death, if I would—

Glared on at the murder'd son, and the
murderous father at rest, . . .

I drove the blade that had slain my hus-
band thrice thro' his breast.

He was loved at least by his dog: it was
chain'd, but its horrible yell

'She has kill'd him, has kill'd him, has
kill'd him' rang out all down
thro' the dell,

Till I felt I could end myself too with the
dagger—so deafen'd and dazed—

Take it, and save me from it! I fled.
I was all but crazed

With the grief that gnaw'd at my heart,
and the weight that dragg'd at
my hand;

But thanks to the Blessed Saints that I
came on none of his band;

And the band will be scatter'd now their
gallant captain is dead,

For I with this dagger of his—do you
doubt me? Here is his head!

THE CHURCH-WARDEN AND THE CURATE

This is written in the dialect which was cur-
rent in my youth at Spilsby and in the country
about it.

I

EH? good daäy! good daäy! thaw it
bean't not mooch of a daäy,

Nasty, casselty¹ weather! an' mea haäfe
down wi' my haäy!²

¹ 'Casselty,' casualty, chance weather.

² 'Haäfe down wi' my haäy,' while my grass
is only half-mown.

II

How be the farm gittin on? noäways.
Gittin on i'deeäd!

Why, tonups was haäfe on 'em fingers
an' toäs,¹ an' the mare brokken-
kneeäd,

An' pigs didn't sell at fall,² an' wa lost
wer Haldeny cow,

An' it beäts ma to knaw wot she died on,
but wool's looking oop only how.

III

An' soä they've maäde tha a parson, an'
thou'll git along, niver fear,

Fur I beän chuch-warden mysen i' the
parish fur fifteen year.

Well—sin ther beä chuch-wardens, ther
mun be parsons an' all,

An' if t'ōne stick alongside t'uther³ the
chuch weänt happen a fall.

IV

Fur I wur a Baptis wonst, an' ageän the
toithe an' the raäte,

Till I fun⁴ that it warn't not the gaäinist⁵
waäy to the narra Gaäte.

An' I can't abeär 'em, I can't, fur a lot
on 'em coom'd ta-year⁶—

I wur down wi' the rheumatis then—to
my pond to wesh thessens there—

Sa I sticks like the ivin⁷ as long as I
lives to the owd chuch now,

Fur they wesh'd their sins i' *my* pond,
an' I doubts they poison'd the cow.

V

Ay, an' ya seed the Bishop. They says
'at he coom'd fra nowt—

Burn i' traäde. Sa I warrants 'e niver
said haäfe wot 'e thowt,

But 'e creeäpt an' 'e crawl'd along, till
'e feeäld 'e could howd 'is oän,

Then 'e married a great Verl's darter,
an' sits o' the Bishop's throän.

¹ 'Fingers and toes,' a disease in turnips.

² 'Fall,' autumn.

³ 'If t'ōne stick alongside t'uther,' if the one
hold by the other. One is pronounced like 'own.'

⁴ 'Fun,' found.

⁵ 'Gaäinist,' nearest.

⁶ 'Ta-year,' this year.

⁷ 'Ivin,' ivy.

VI

Now I'll gie tha a bit o' my mind an'
tha weant be taakin' offence,
Fur thou be a big scholard now wi' a
hoonderd haäcre o' sense—
But sich an obstropulous¹ lad—naay,
naay—fur I minds tha sa well,
Tha'd niver not hopple² thy tongue, an'
the tongue's sit afire o' Hell,
As I says to my missis to-daay, when she
hurl'd a plaäte at the cat
An' anoother ageän my noäse. Ya was
niver sa bad as that.

VII

But I minds when i' Howlaby beck won
daäy ya was ticklin' o' trout,
An' keeäper 'e seed ya an roon'd, an' 'e
beal'd³ to ya 'Lad coom hout'
An' ya stood oop naäkt i' the beck, an'
ya tell'd 'im to knaw his awn
plaäce
An' ya call'd 'im a clown, ya did, an' ya
thraw'd the fish i' 'is faäce,
An' 'e torn'd⁴ as red as a stag-tuckey's⁵
wattles, but theer an' then
I coämb'd 'im down, fur I promised ya'd
niver not do it ageän.

VIII

An' I cotch'd tha wonst i' my garden,
when thou was a height-year-
howd,⁶
An' I fun thy pockets as full o' my pip-
pins as iver they'd 'owd,⁷
An' thou was as peärky⁸ as owt, an' tha
maäde me as mad as mad,
But I says to tha 'keep 'em, an' wel-
come' fur thou was the Parson's
lad.

¹ 'Obstropulous,' obstreperous—here the Cur-
ate makes a sign of deprecation.

² 'Hopple' or 'hobble,' to tie the legs of a
skittish cow when she is being milked.

³ 'Beal'd,' bellowed.

⁴ In such words as 'torned' (turned), 'hurled,'
the *r* is hardly audible.

⁵ 'Stag-tuckey,' turkey-cock.

⁶ 'Height-year-howd,' eight-year-old.

⁷ 'Owd,' hold. ⁸ 'Peärky,' pert.

IX

An Parson 'e 'ears on it all, an' then
taäkes kindly to me,
An' then I wur chose Chuch-warden an'
coom'd to the top o' the tree,
Fur Quoloty's hall my friends, an' they
maäkes ma a help to the poor,
When I gits the plaäte fuller o' Soondays
nor ony chuch-warden afor,
Fur if iver thy feyther 'ed riled me I kep'
mysen meeäk as a lamb,
An' saw by the Graäce o' the Lord, Mr.
Harry, I ham wot I ham.

X

But Parson 'e *will* speäk out, saw, now
'e be sixty-seven,
He'll niver swap Owlby an' Scratby fur
owt but the Kingdom o' Heaven;
An' thou'll be 'is Curate 'ere, but, if iver
tha meäns to git 'igher,
Tha mun tackle the sins o' the Wo'ld,¹
an' not the faults o' the Squire.
An' I reckons tha'll light of a livin' some-
wheers i' the Wowd² or the Fen,
If tha cottons down to thy betters, an'
keeäps thysen to thysen.
But niver not speäk plaain out, if tha
wants to git forrards a bit,
But creeäp along the hedge-bottoms, an'
thou'll be a Bishop yit.

XI

Naäy, but tha *mun* speäk hout to the
Baptises here i' the town,
Fur moäst on 'em talks ageän tithe, an'
I'd like tha to preäch 'em down,
Fur *they've* bin a-preächin' *mea* down,
they heve, an' I haätes 'em now,
Fur they leäved their nasty sins i' *my*
pond, an' it poison'd the cow.

¹ 'Wo'ld,' the world. Short *o*.

² 'Wowd,' wold.

CHARITY

I

WHAT am I doing, you say to me,
 'wasting the sweet summer hours'?
 Haven't you eyes? I am dressing the
 grave of a woman with flowers.

II

For a woman ruin'd the world, as God's
 own scriptures tell,
 And a man ruin'd mine, but a woman,
 God bless her, kept me from Hell.

III

Love me? O yes, no doubt—how long
 —till you threw me aside!
 Dresses and laces and jewels and never
 a ring for the bride.

IV

All very well just now to be calling me
 darling and sweet,
 And after a while would it matter so
 much if I came on the street?

V

You when I met you first—when *he*
 brought you!—I turn'd away
 And the hard blue eyes have it still, that
 stare of a beast of prey.

VI

You were his friend—you—you—when
 he promised to make me his bride,
 And you knew that he meant to betray
 me—you knew—you knew that
 he lied.

VII

He married an heiress, an orphan with
 half a shire of estate,—
 I sent him a desolate wail and a curse,
 when I learn'd my fate.

VIII

For I used to play with the knife, creep
 down to the river-shore,

Moan to myself 'one plunge—then quiet
 for evermore.'

IX

Would the man have a touch of remorse
 when he heard what an end was
 mine?
 Or brag to his fellow rakes of his conquest
 over their wine?

X

Money—my hire—*his* money—I sent
 him back what he gave,—
 Will you move a little that way? your
 shadow falls on the grave.

XI

Two trains clash'd: then and there he
 was crush'd in a moment and
 died,
 But the new-wedded wife was unharm'd,
 tho' sitting close at his side.

XII

She found my letter upon him, my wail
 of reproach and scorn;
 I had cursed the woman he married, and
 him, and the day I was born.

XIII

They put him aside for ever, and after a
 week—no more—
 A stranger as welcome as Satan—a widow
 came to my door:

XIV

So I turn'd my face to the wall, I was
 mad, I was raving-wild,
 I was close on that hour of dishonour,
 the birth of a baseborn child.

XV

O you that can flatter your victims, and
 juggle, and lie and cajole,
 Man, can you even guess at the love of
 a soul for a soul?

XVI

I had cursed her as woman and wife,
and in wife and woman I found
The tenderest Christ-like creature that
ever stept on the ground.

XVII

She watch'd me, she nursed me, she fed
me, she sat day and night by my
bed,
Till the joyless birthday came of a boy
born happily dead.

XVIII

And her name? what was it? I ask'd
her. She said with a sudden glow
On her patient face 'My dear, I will
tell you before I go.'

XIX

And I when I learnt it at last, I shriek'd,
I sprang from my seat,
I wept, and I kiss'd her hands, I flung
myself down at her feet,

XX

And we pray'd together for *him*, for *him*
who had given her the name.
She has left me enough to live on. I
need no wages of shame.

XXI

She died of a fever caught when a nurse
in a hospital ward.
She is high in the Heaven of Heavens,
she is face to face with her Lord,

XXII

And He sees not her like anywhere in
this pitiless world of ours!
I have told you my tale. Get you gone.
I am dressing her grave with
flowers.

KAPIOLANI

Kapiolani was a great chieftainess who lived in the Sandwich Islands at the beginning of this century. She won the cause of Christianity by openly defying the priests of the terrible goddess Peelè. In spite of their threats of vengeance she ascended the volcano Mauna-Loa, then clambered down over a bank of cinders 400 feet high to the great lake of fire (nine miles round)—Kilaueā—the home and haunt of the goddess, and flung into the boiling lava the consecrated berries which it was sacrilege for a woman to handle.

I

WHEN from the terrors of Nature a
people have fashion'd and worship
a Spirit of Evil,
Blest be the Voice of the Teacher who
calls to them
'Set yourselves free!'

II

Noble the Saxon who hurl'd at his Idol
a valorous weapon in olden
England!
Great and greater, and greatest of women,
island heroine, Kapiolani
Clomb the mountain, and flung the berries,
and dared the Goddess, and freed
the people
Of Hawa-i-ee!

III

A people believing that Peelè the Goddess
would wallow in fiery riot and
revel
On Kilaueā,
Dance in a fountain of flame with her
devils, or shake with her thunders
and shatter her island,
Rolling her anger
Thro' blasted valley and flaring forest
in blood-red cataracts down to
the sea!

IV

Long as the lava-light
Glares from the lava-lake
Dazing the starlight,

Long as the silvery vapour in daylight
Over the mountain
Floats, will the glory of Kapiolani be
mingled with either on Hawa-i-ee.

V

What said her Priesthood?
'Woe to this island if ever a woman
should handle or gather the berries
of Peelè !

Accurséd were she !

And woe to this island if ever a woman
should climb to the dwelling of
Peelè the Goddess !

Accurséd were she !'

VI

One from the Sunrise
Dawn'd on His people, and slowly before
him

Vanish'd shadow-like

Gods and Goddesses,

None but the terrible Peelè remaining as
Kapiolani ascended her mountain,

Baffled her priesthood,

Broke the Taboo,

Dipt to the crater,

Call'd on the Power adored by the
Christian, and crying 'I dare her,
let Peelè avenge herself' !

Into the flame-billow dash'd the berries,
and drove the demon from Hawa-
i-ee.

THE DAWN

"You are but children."

Egyptian Priest to Solon.

I

RED of the Dawn !

Screams of a babe in the red-hot palms
of a Moloch of Tyre,

Man with his brotherless dinner on
man in the tropical wood,

Priests in the name of the Lord passing
souls thro' fire to the fire,

Head-hunters and boats of Dahomey
that float upon human blood !

II

Red of the Dawn !

Godless fury of peoples, and Christless
frolic of kings,

And the bolt of war dashing down
upon cities and blazing farms,

For Babylon was a child new-born,
and Rome was a babe in arms,

And London and Paris and all the rest
are as yet but in leading-strings.

III

Dawn not Day,

While scandal is mouthing a bloodless
name at *her* cannibal feast,

And rake-ruin'd bodies and souls go
down in a common wreck,

And the press of a thousand cities is
prized for it smells of the beast,

Or easily violates virgin Truth for a
coin or a cheque.

IV

Dawn not Day !

Is it Shame, so few should have climb'd
from the dens in the level below,

Men, with a heart and a soul, no
slaves of a four-footed will ?

But if twenty million of summers are
stored in the sunlight still,

We are far from the noon of man, there
is time for the race to grow.

V

Red of the Dawn !

Is it turning a fainter red ? so be it, but
when shall we lay

The Ghost of the Brute that is walking
and haunting us yet, and be free ?

In a hundred, a thousand winters ?
Ah, what will *our* children be,

The men of a hundred thousand, a
million summers away ?

THE MAKING OF MAN

WHERE is one that, born of woman,
altogether can escape

From the lower world within him, moods
of tiger, or of ape ?

Man as yet is being made, and ere the
crowning Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch
him into shape?

All about him shadow still, but, while
the races flower and fade,
Prophet-eyes may catch a glory slowly
gaining on the shade,
Till the peoples all are one, and all
their voices blend in choric
Hallelujah to the Maker 'It is finish'd.
Man is made.'

THE DREAMER

ON a midnight in midwinter when all
but the winds were dead,
'The meek shall inherit the earth' was
a Scripture that rang thro' his
head,
Till he dream'd that a Voice of the Earth
went wailing past him and said :

'I am losing the light of my Youth
And the Vision that led me of old,
And I clash with an iron Truth,
When I make for an Age of gold,
And I would that my race were run,
For teeming with liars, and madmen,
and knaves,
And wearied of Autocrats, Anarchs,
and Slaves,
And darken'd with doubts of a Faith
that saves,
And crimson with battles, and hollow
with graves,
To the wail of my winds, and the
moan of my waves
I whirl, and I follow the Sun.'

Was it only the wind of the Night shrill-
ing out Desolation and wrong
Thro' a dream of the dark? Yet he
thought that he answer'd her wail
with a song—

Moaning your losses, O Earth,
Heart-weary and overdone!
But all's well that ends well,
Whirl, and follow the Sun!

He is racing from heaven to heaven
And less will be lost than won,
For all's well that ends well,
Whirl, and follow the Sun!

The Reign of the Meek upon earth,
O weary one, has it begun?
But all's well that ends well,
Whirl, and follow the Sun!

For moans will have grown sphere-
music
O ever your race be run!
And all's well that ends well,
Whirl, and follow the Sun!

MECHANOPHILUS

(In the time of the first railways.)

Now first we stand and understand,
And sunder false from true,
And handle boldly with the hand,
And see and shape and do.

Dash back that ocean with a pier,
Strow yonder mountain flat,
A railway there, a tunnel here,
Mix me this Zone with that!

Bring me my horse—my horse? my wings
That I may soar the sky,
For Thought into the outward springs,
I find her with the eye.

O will she, moonlike, sway the main,
And bring or chase the storm,
Who was a shadow in the brain,
And is a living form?

Far as the Future vaults her skies,
From this my vantage ground
To those still-working energies
I spy nor term nor bound.

As we surpass our fathers' skill,
Our sons will shame our own;
A thousand things are hidden still
And not a hundred known.

And had some prophet spoken true
Of all we shall achieve,
The wonders were so wildly new,
That no man would believe.

Meanwhile, my brothers, work, and wield
The forces of to-day,
And plow the Present like a field,
And garner all you may !

You, what the cultured surface grows,
Dispense with careful hands :
Deep under deep for ever goes,
Heaven over heaven expands.

RIFLEMEN FORM !

THERE is a sound of thunder afar,
Storm in the South that darkens the day !
Storm of battle and thunder of war !
Well if it do not roll our way.
Storm, Storm, Riflemen form !
Ready, be ready against the storm !
Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen form !

Be not deaf to the sound that warns,
Be not gull'd by a despot's plea !
Are figs of thistles ? or grapes of thorns ?
How can a despot feel with the Free ?
Form, Form, Riflemen Form !
Ready, be ready to meet the storm !
Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen form !

Let your reforms for a moment go !
Look to your butts, and take good aims !
Better a rotten borough or so
Than a rotten fleet and a city in flames !
Storm, Storm, Riflemen form !
Ready, be ready against the storm !
Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen form !

Form, be ready to do or die !
Form in Freedom's name and the Queen's !
True we have got—*such* a faithful ally
That only the Devil can tell what he
means.

Form, Form, Riflemen Form !
Ready, be ready to meet the storm !
Riflemen, Riflemen, Riflemen form !¹

¹ I have been asked to republish this old poem, which was first published in 'The Times,' May 9, 1859, before the Volunteer movement began.

THE TOURNEY

RALPH would fight in Edith's sight,
For Ralph was Edith's lover,
Ralph went down like a fire to the fight,
Struck to the left and struck to the right,
Roll'd them over and over.
'Gallant Sir Ralph,' said the king.

Casques were crack'd and hauberkshack'd,
Lances snapt in sunder,
Rang the stroke, and sprang the blood,
Knights were thwack'd and riven, and
hew'd

Like broad oaks with thunder.
'O what an arm,' said the king.

Edith bow'd her stately head,
Saw them lie confounded,
Edith Montfort bow'd her head,
Crown'd her knight's, and flush'd as red
As poppies when she crown'd it.
'Take her Sir Ralph,' said the king.

THE WANDERER

THE gleam of household sunshine ends,
And here no longer can I rest ;
Farewell !—You will not speak, my
friends,
Unfriendly of your parted guest.

O well for him that finds a friend,
Or makes a friend where'er he come,
And loves the world from end to end,
And wanders on from home to home !

O happy he, and fit to live,
On whom a happy home has power
To make him trust his life, and give
His fealty to the halcyon hour !

I count you kind, I hold you true ;
But what may follow who can tell ?
Give me a hand—and you—and you—
And deem me grateful, and farewell !

POETS AND CRITICS

THIS thing, that thing is the rage,
 Helter-skelter runs the age ;
 Minds on this round earth of ours
 Vary like the leaves and flowers,
 Fashion'd after certain laws ;
 Sing thou low or loud or sweet,
 All at all points thou canst not meet,
 Some will pass and some will pause.

What is true at last will tell :
 Few at first will place thee well ;
 Some too low would have thee shine,
 Some too high—no fault of thine—
 Hold thine own, and work thy will !
 Year will graze the heel of year,
 But seldom comes the poet here,
 And the Critic's rarer still.

A VOICE SPAKE OUT OF
THE SKIES

A VOICE spake out of the skies
 To a just man and a wise—
 'The world and all within it
 Will only last a minute !'
 And a beggar began to cry
 'Food, food or I die' !
 Is it worth his while to eat,
 Or mine to give him meat,
 If the world and all within it
 Were nothing the next minute ?

DOUBT AND PRAYER

THO' Sin too oft, when smitten by Thy
 rod,
 Rail at 'Blind Fate' with many a vain
 'Alas !'
 From sin thro' sorrow into Thee we pass
 By that same path our true forefathers
 trod ;
 And let not Reason fail me, nor the sod
 Draw from my death Thy living flower
 and grass,
 Before I learn that Love, which is, and
 was

My Father, and my Brother, and my
 God !
 Steel me with patience ! soften me with
 grief !
 Let blow the trumpet strongly while I
 pray,
 Till this embattled wall of unbelief
 My prison, not my fortress, fall away !
 Then, if Thou willest, let my day be
 brief,
 So Thou wilt strike Thy glory thro' the
 day.

FAITH

I

DOUBT no longer that the Highest is the
 wisest and the best,
 Let not all that saddens Nature blight
 thy hope or break thy rest,
 Quail not at the fiery mountain, at the
 shipwreck, or the rolling
 Thunder, or the rending earthquake, or
 the famine, or the pest !

II

Neither mourn if human creeds be lower
 than the heart's desire !
 Thro' the gates that bar the distance
 comes a gleam of what is higher.
 Wait till Death has flung them open,
 when the man will make the Maker
 Dark no more with human hatreds in the
 glare of deathless fire !

THE SILENT VOICES

WHEN the dumb Hour, clothed in black,
 Brings the Dreams about my bed.
 Call me not so often back,
 Silent Voices of the dead,
 Toward the lowland ways behind me,
 And the sunlight that is gone !
 Call me rather, silent voices,
 Forward to the starry track
 Glimmering up the heights beyond me,
 On, and always on !

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

I

WILL my tiny spark of being wholly
 vanish in your deeps and heights?
 Must my day be dark by reason, O ye
 Heavens, of your boundless nights,
 Rush of Suns, and roll of systems, and
 your fiery clash of meteorites?

II

‘Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the
 limit of thy human state,
 Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that
 Power which alone is great,
 Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor
 the silent Opener of the Gate.’

THE DEATH OF THE DUKE
OF CLARENCE AND AVON-
DALE*To the Mourners*

THE bridal garland falls upon the bier,
 The shadow of a crown, that o’er him
 hung,

Has vanish’d in the shadow cast by
 Death.

So princely, tender, truthful, reverent,
 pure—

Mourn! That a world-wide Empire
 mourns with you,

That all the Thrones are clouded by
 your loss,

Were slender solace. Yet be comforted;
 For if this earth be ruled by Perfect

Love,

Then, after his brief range of blameless
 days,

The toll of funeral in an Angel ear
 Sounds happier than the merriest mar-
 riage-bell.

The face of Death is toward the Sun
 of Life,

His shadow darkens earth: his truer
 name

Is ‘Onward,’ no discordance in the
 roll

And march of that Eternal Harmony
 Whereto the worlds beat time, tho’ faintly
 heard

Until the great Hereafter. Mourn in
 hope!

CROSSING THE BAR

SUNSET and evening star,
 And one clear call for me!
 And may there be no moaning of the bar,
 When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
 Too full for sound and foam,
 When that which drew from out the
 boundless deep
 Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
 And after that the dark!
 And may there be no sadness of farewell,
 When I embark;

For tho’ from out our bourne of Time
 and Place

The flood may bear me far,
 I hope to see my Pilot face to face
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